Louis H. Forster

Sloane House

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2022 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

https://archive.org/details/siberiangarrison0000rodi

SIBERIAN GARRISON

SIBERIAN GARRISON

By RODION MARKOVITS

Translated from the Hungarian

★

LONDON: PETER DAVIES

1929

SZIBERIAI GARNIZON.

Copyright. Genius Kiadas, Budapest, 1929.
Copyright. Peter Davies, Ltd., London, 1929.
Translated by George Halasz.

Published in December, 1929

Printed in England for Peter Davies Ltd.,
by Alexander Shand, at 6 Kirby Street, London, E.C.1

CHAPTER I

THE tender charm of a Summer Sunday afternoon enwrapped the city.

For six long days, the tall chimneys of the factories had hung the city with gloomy draperies of dark smoke, but the sombre streamers disappeared with the last shriek of the whistles.

In the morning, a warm Summer shower rarefied the curtains of smoke; then a lusty breeze tore them to pieces and chased them away.

The pleasant odour of distant fields hesitated in the air, and the sky spread over Kispest like a gigantic, blue silk parasol.

A window was open in Nagy Janos Street. The patient himself had opened it and, as he looked out now, the joy of the street trembled on his wan features.

"I believe I'm cured," he thought with some anxiety.

There was fear in his simple statement, and he crawled back into his bed harassed by mixed emotions.

Everything had been suspended during his illness. Everything had been blunted. The importance of all things had become grey. And now slowly, as he recovered, the feeling of responsibility was beginning to reawaken in him.

Until now, he had had only one duty: to get well. But during his illness, the petty worries had grown to huge proportions. Small cracks had widened into deep chasms. Wells of fresh water had become muddy. And he could do nothing about it. To him everything remained as it had been—he had been gently shielded from everything.

He had come to the capital from a small provincial town in order to exchange his diploma for bread. He had temporarily settled in this suburb of factories because he had thought that, with the cheaper living conditions, he would have more time to wait for an opportunity. He had been hoping to pounce down upon some secure little prey of a white-collar job.

But his sore throat had knocked him off his feet. He could not swallow without pain for weeks. He had tried to force and hurry his convalescence and now, at last, it was merrily approaching on this joyous, beautiful Summer afternoon.

Then, all of a sudden, his illness seemed to appear to him as the last remnant of his receding happiness. It had become, all of a sudden, a blue island in an ocean of worried years. For a few weeks, anxiety and hope had been glistening toward him from the eyes of those around him. He closed his eyes now and recalled that lovely moment, that scene of a few weeks ago, when his wife, with petals of apple-blossom on her blond hair and happy laughter on her lips, had thrown herself upon his bed, stammering with overwhelming joy:

"—our little boy shook the tree—the little apple tree—and I stood beneath the tree and all the blossoms fell on me —and our little boy shook the tree—"

He closed his eyes. He saw the merry tremble of the beloved blond curls, the happy curves of her lips, the vernal clarity of her eyes. He recalled the soft touch of his son's tender little hands on his feverish brow.

Now his illness was departing, and his youth, too. It was drifting away from him together with his illness, and the blue island was about to disappear in the distance.

It was possible that to-morrow, too—it was, indeed, highly probable that to-morrow, too—he would be cared for with the same tender love, would be delighted by the patter of an innocent child. Vernal purity would still hover in the eyes—but there would be reproaches in them also. He was irritatedly waiting for the question to pierce his heart:

"What's going to happen?"

Somewhere he had read or heard that bacilli reproduced at an unheard-of speed. It seemed to him that a responsibility-bacillus had got into his blood and the germs now multiplied with astounding rapidity, spreading a frightful fever in his veins. They flowered in him, the herd of bacilli was racing in his blood, the sudden disease infected his fingers. He felt it in his back, it tickled his palms, numbed his knees.

It was already in his bed, hiding in the pillows. It climbed the walls and occupied the little painted flowers on the paper.

The glasses on the washstand breathed reproaches, the air became solid, he could hardly inhale—

"Have you been sleeping?" his wife asked.

"No, I haven't—of course I haven't," he answered nervously.

Slow, drawn-out conversation began.

His wife put her hand on his forehead.

He felt like blurting out:

"You must be thinking that—I've been ill a little too long!"

He suppressed it, but when he spoke there was still malice in his voice:

"It's about time for me to get well."

His wife heaved a sigh:

"My God—that doesn't depend on us—"

He was annoyed. The bacilli itched, irritated and excited him. Here he was now, in the clutches of a new fever, a new disease. A disease more stubborn, deeper, more tormenting. Malevolent. She shouldn't have said that. "Be quiet, dear. Don't worry—" Of course, that's what she should have said: "Don't worry."

"I hope I'll be all right by to-morrow."

Slyly, he watched her words.

He still hoped for them. He pricked up his ears, waiting thirstily: "Don't worry!" But the answer did not come. Neither that nor any other. Cruel silence overwhelmed the room. A ripe boil was about to burst open. He chafed it:

"I think I'll be all right by to-morrow. And then I'll go to town—"

He expected to hear lively protests: "No, you won't, my dear. Not a bit of it. You won't go to-morrow."

"Do you think I'll be well enough by to-morrow to go to town?"

"It's possible, dear, I don't know."

These words threw him into a rage. The new disease, the bacilli, tormented him. They drove him on: "Responsibility . . ."

They were gnawing away at his flesh:

"Yes—now you may go. You are well. Go! In your little canoe, down to the sea. Open your little diploma-sail against

the storm, against the hurricane. Go—fight against the gigantic ocean of humanity. Go—and try to conquer virgin countries. But, first, reach shore—"

Confused conversation drifted in from the street. As if the men and women basking in the Sunday sunshine were excitedly shouting to each other.

"What's that?"

His wife went to the window. As she stood there, the silhouette of her charming blond head framed by the window, as she lifted her hand to her eyes—all this hit his heart.

"How cruel I can be—" he thought.

He forgot everything.

"What is it, dear, what is it?" he asked her, driven by curiosity.

"Nothing of importance. The gypsies have come home, with their violins. They say they were not permitted to play. They complain that they won't earn anything to-day. Apparently they got into a fight, that's why they can't play."

"Ask them."

"It's no use, they'll lie to you. They say the Archduke has been murdered—that's why they can't play—"

"What do you mean—the Archduke murdered? Where was he murdered?"

"Oh, it's just talk. They're afraid of their women because they haven't brought home any money."

But the gypsies gathered excitedly in Nagy Janos Street. They shouted, explained, cursed, complained. This street was Gypsy Lane in Kispest, and the crowds grew minute by minute. More and more musicians returned from town. He could see, from his bed, the necks of two bass viols, he could hear deep, sonorous voices:

"Well, it's on account of the mourning. They say we can't play for a week."

He swallowed and felt no pain. He felt something quite different. As if the pain had been extinguished by an exhilarating serum. The fatigue of his long days in bed yelled out in him.

"Give me my clothes, dear."

"You can't get up. Good heavens, you can't get up yet!"

He repeated it in a dry and determined voice:
"I'll go to town. Let me have my clothes."

CHAPTER II

HE listened intently to the people in the tram-car. Factory workers, labourers, women with aprons, tailors' assistants, apprentices, milliners, factory girls, modistes, railway workers.

"The blouse will have a low neck and the skirt will be pleated. Uncle Charles gave me a yard of narrow silk ribbon, but I'm afraid it won't be enough—"

"He isn't a back! I tell you, he isn't a back! Why, that fellow doesn't know how to play football, he's got two left feet—"

"I can't understand how they could steal it! I can't understand it. When I paid for my beer it was still in my pocket—"

"I told the gardener not to force it. I know it can't be done. I remember very well, it never grows in the first year. He said I should just leave it to him, he'd already tried it in Szabadka. So I left it to him and, of course, nothing's come of it."

"Well, who would have believed it! I placed my bet in February, but I did it just out of fun. The horse was first last year and first the year before last. I thought, it might win again. I asked the bookmaker what the odds were on Rascal. Fifteen to one, he said. I took a chance. I'd never have thought that he'd win again; now I've made a hundred and fifty. Who would have believed it—three times in succession!"

He was disappointed. No one said anything about the great event.

But—why was it a great event? Why should it be a great event? What had he expected of it, anyway? What had he hoped for? Had he thought that, just because the Archduke had been murdered, he would get a job sooner?

He remembered: once he had had a lottery-ticket, and when he had looked up the winning numbers in the newspapers he had found that he had not won. He had read the list of the winning numbers twice over—with the ticket in his

hand—in vain. Suddenly, his eyes had been caught by the sensational description of an earthquake. He had begun to read it. He had read of the horrified flight of the populace, of the heroism of the troops, of collapsing cathedrals and derailed trains. The story had shaken him. And he had forgotten all about the lottery. It had been so insignificant, compared to the earthquake. In fact, he had not thought of it since. Instead of a prize, he had been given an earthquake —and it had never occurred to him that he had been cheated.

"I need a job, I need bread—and my head is full of the Archduke."

"Special! Special!"

He trembled in all his body. He bought a paper and avidly began to read it. Yes, the gypsies had told the truth. Every single page of this extra edition contained something about the murder. It had happened barely a few hours before, yet the long columns were already filled with it. It was shouted on the streets.

He got off the tram-car and entered the first *café*. He sat down and surrendered himself to the great event.

Sarajevo . . . Princip . . . revolver . . .

But how could they do it so quickly? How could they write millions of tiny black letters in so short a time?

At every table, people were rustling newspapers. Everybody was reading. Bareheaded men were running on the street, yelling:

"Paper! Hi! paper! Give me one, too!"

Then: the pages rustled less actively, and a man at one of the billiard tables turned to his partner:

"Let's go on with the game."

Then: the pages rustled more and more listlessly, and a lady at a neighbouring table put her paper down:

"Well, as I said, Aunt Irma didn't like the thing at all—"

A shout rent the air:

"Dark brown with whipped cream, table two, centre!"

The proprietor took off his pince-nez and hurried to the little fountain.

"No, my dear child, you shouldn't do that." He was addressing a little girl, and his voice choked with suppressed

anger. "Other good little girls want to look at the gold fish too."

He would have liked to rise, to explain it to them, to shake them:

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is not an everyday event! Ladies and gentlemen, the murder of an Archduke is history—it'll be taught in schools, it will be an examination subject, and the boy who doesn't know it will fail!"

"Hi! waiter, do you call this lukewarm? Why it burns my mouth! Hi ! Please, come here for a second. I just want to ask you, what do you call hot if you call this lukewarm?"

The proprietor left the fountain and hurried to the nervous patron. He told the waiter to bring some cold milk and assured the nervous gentleman that this waiter was not a regular man. Just an extra. As a rule, he never hires such careless people, but to-day is Sunday and Summer, and my God, such things do happen . . . But what do you say, sir, to this murder in Sarajevo? Of course, I always said, the anarchists—

"What do I care? I'm not interested in that. At five o'clock in the afternoon on a Sunday there's but one thing in the world that interests me, a cup of lukewarm coffee with two slices of coffee-cake, one slice yellow, the other brown. I'll read all about it to-night, in my bed, but I don't want to be bothered now. I am bothered enough all the week."

"But it hurts our business. We can't have music, for instance. This is one of the features of my place, music from nine o'clock on. If I can't have music, I may as well shut up. Do you think it'll have serious consequences?"

"What do you mean, serious consequences? The only serious consequence that I can see is a scorching hot coffee. . . . It's very regrettable, but on a Sunday afternoon, when I want to have a cup of coffee—"

"Do you think they'll let the gypsies play to-morrow?"

"How should I know? If the police commissioner wants to flatter the people higher up, the prohibition may even last for a couple of weeks."

"A couple of weeks! D'you really mean that, a couple of weeks? My God, that's the last straw! Business is bad in

Summer, anyway, and now this prohibition—I shall go bankrupt, I shan't survive it."

At every table, the great event was slowly being brought into contact with their everyday life.

"You want to go down to Bihar? Business trip? Why, of course! You don't think that the trains will stop because of the murder, do you?"

"I'll have to change it a little bit. I'll print a sort of black border all round it and add to the caption: 'Who were shamefully murdered by criminals in Sarajevo!' "

Rashly and superficially, as they had been accustomed to treat and to discuss every event, they were now bringing *the* event into relation to themselves. But this was not what he had expected. He had thought that public opinion would explode like a bomb, he had thought that they would, all of a sudden, unbend—Yes—but, what had he meant by 'unbending'? What had he thought, how would they do it? What would unbending consist of, after all? It seemed to him he was still feverish.

He rose and slowly left the *café*. And the overcrowded tram-car was soon racing with him toward Kispest.

He crouched, dejected and disappointed, in a corner of the car. Something had gone wrong. Something had failed. Something had not come off. Something had "frozen"—yes, that was it, that was the word that characterized his excursion. He felt a slight irritation in his throat. That, too! He had been cheated. Cheated, how? Who had cheated him? Had he imagined that the cruel fate of the Archduke and his wife would solve his problems? Why had he connected his own fate with that of the Archduke? He could not understand it.

Next to him, two men were conversing in slow, measured tones:

"I hope there won't be any scandal. I can't understand how it could have happened. Carelessness, that's all. Not to notice a mistake like that—"

They were carefully examining the extra edition and pointed out passages with a pencil:

"Here—and here—here, too—Well, it's too late now—"

He also took the newspaper out of his pocket and tried to find out what the scandal was.

"The sad demise of the old Emperor—" he read.

And again:

"Franz Ferdinand, Emperor and King, has resolved—"

He knew something about editorial work,and now he had discovered not only what the scandal was but also the explanation of the magic rapidity with which the extra editions had been prepared.

The obituary of the old Emperor, as well as the glorifying articles of the new Emperor and King, had been lying in the editorial offices, set up and all ready for print, for several years. The extra editions were now filled with these articles —slightly changed. Of course, the articles already set up referred to the deceased Emperor and the new King. They had not counted on what actually had happened. After all, nothing happened but that the old Emperor survived the young Archduke. And, here and there, the old expressions had not been changed.

And all of them had already been set up for years.

This was the scandal. This was the only scandal in the whole affair.

The world remained where it had been, and just as it had been. It was merely a question of a few typographical errors.

Scandal.

CHAPTER III

HE awoke late the next morning, and immediately began to experiment with his throat. And he found, somewhat to his dismay, that there was nothing the matter with it. He was well. He had been cured. Now: what should he do with his health?

They had had no chance to talk over anything about yesterday's excursion, last night. When he had arrived home, his wife was already asleep. He had not liked that, she should have been waiting for him. Although—

But, after all, he had to say something about it, and he began, rather timidly and ill at ease:

"Well, the gypsies were right—yes, they were—The papers were full of it—There was great excitement in the city—"

His wife looked at him and there was sorrow in her eyes. It seemed like a challenge to him.

"I know, I know," he began a little excitedly. "I know what you want to say: what have we got to do with it? That it is of no interest to us. That a job would be much better."

"I haven't thought of that, really. But why do you get so excited? First of all, you ought to get well. Your throat is still sensitive. I am quite sure of that. You oughtn't to talk so much. It isn't good for your throat. Where's the paper?"

He was a little calmer when he gave her the paper. She looked at it with interest.

"Look!" she exclaimed in a lively voice. "These stories must have been written a long time ago. This one mentions the deceased Emperor. And this one here the new King. How interesting!"

"Have you noticed that?"

"Didn't *you* see it?"

"No, I didn't. Not until I heard people speak about it in the tram-car. You have good eyes—"

The fact that his wife noticed the changes so quickly depressed him. He watched her now, how she glanced through the articles, how she folded up the paper, how she calmly put it on the table.

"Have you read it already?"

"I know everything. I don't need to know more. It's a big thing—but—"

But. This "but" meant: What, after all, did you expect of it? Did you think that it would solve our problem? But. How did it occur to you to connect our little life with the Court? With the Court! Was this the reason why you hurried so breathlessly to town yesterday afternoon? Was this the reason for spending twenty *filler* on a tram fare? Did you think that the Court would repay you these expenses?

Your great event! Your decisive event! A few typographical errors. Nothing remained of the great experience but a few typographical errors. It was so remote, so far away—

He felt ashamed of himself. Whom was he accusing? With whom was he arguing? Who had hurt him?

"My throat doesn't hurt me any more."

"You ought to go back to bed for a couple of days. It'll do you good."

"I am all right. We'll go to town this afternoon. Will you come?"

They went to town together. It was a very calm, very tranquil afternoon. *Café*, double portions of whipped cream on their coffee, gentle gossip.

He went to town every day. Alone. He wanted to settle the question of his job. He visited associations, societies, looked up old friends and colleagues, looked around. He never said he needed a job, he merely remarked quite casually:

"I shouldn't mind accepting a good position as office manager somewhere—"

He read the *Gazette*, the official organ of the government, every day. The more his hopes shrank, the more diligently he perused the *Gazette*. And the time came when the *Gazette* was his only hope.

He let the days pass by him, he was not interested in them.

He wanted nothing but a quiet haven whither he could withdraw with his family, a reliable, dependable station where he could bring his train to a stop.

He was full of hopes. But all he could bring home from his daily ramblings about town were encouraging words. He tried to calm his wife with these encouragements, and himself, too. He was unable to pick up anything else.

The only result of his endless visits was a suggestion carefully couched in a hopeful sentence:

"Tell me, dear—What would you say if I accepted an appointment to a District Court—What do you think?"

"It'd be all right as far as I'm concerned, dear."

"But—not here—Not in Budapest."

"Well, then not here—"

"I read to-day in the *Gazette* that there was something at Puj—Do you know where Puj is?"

"I don't."

"It's somewhere in Transylvania. I am quite certain I could get it."

"Very well. It makes no difference where it is. It'll be very good for us."

Well, then: Puj. He had never heard of this village before. And now it seemed he would have to live his whole life there. It did not matter. He would read old magazines in his garden on quiet Summer afternoons, beneath the pear trees, and, some day, he would buy a hammock. He would suspend it on two pear trees. He already saw his son swinging in it. The boy would enjoy that.

He managed to get a letter of introduction from the deputy of his county to the Under Secretary in the Ministry of Justice, and then spent his days waiting for His Excellency to return to Budapest from Kisvarda. For, quite accidentally, His Excellency was not at home. He was told by the clerk in His Excellency's office that he would return on Saturday. Very well. He would come again on Saturday. But he came every day; he secretly hoped that His Excellency might return earlier. The deputy's letter was always in his pocket—he might need it.

"Special! Special!"

He was far less eager to read the special editions now than he had been a few weeks before. How silly he had been to expect anything of the great event. It had not given him anything, not even as much as that earthquake once upon a time. He stuffed the newspaper into his pocket. He would read it at home, in Kispest. In his bed. He remembered the nervous gentleman in the *café*. "I don't want to be bothered; I want to drink my coffee."

In the *café* he sat down at the journalists' table. He loved to listen to literary arguments. He was positively delighted if, once in a while, they talked of old Hungarian poets. Walt Whitman, Wilde, Verlaine—those he did not like. He did not know them. But when one of them so much as mentioned Csokonai, his heart was filled with joy. At such times he was grateful to the newspaper men. He could join their conversation. He remembered the provincial *Gymnasium* where he had studied, where he had learned to love these poets.

But the newspaper men were talking of quite different things this time. He could not understand one single word of their argument.

If Giessl left Belgrade—Who is this man Giessl?—The Czar will not tolerate it—What will the Czar not tolerate?—Why are all these things so important?—That is the only possible result of the ultimatum—What ultimatum are they talking about? And why is this ultimatum so important? Policy of encircling—Triple Alliance—Then, the ultimatum again—

It was as if they had been talking in a foreign language. He rose, ill at ease, irritated, and dissatisfied, and went home. He saw, with his mind's eye, the charming little Transylvanian town where he would be an Associate Judge of the District Court, he saw the hammock suspended between two pear trees and he saw himself swinging his son in the hammock.

He forgot all about the newspaper.

He threw himself upon the bed, but then the paper rustled in his wife's hand and he woke up.

"Well, is there anything interesting in it?"

"Haven't you seen it? Something funny must be going on. I can't understand it. They say that if there is no reply to some sort of ultimatum, there will be war. The paper says here that, at this moment, the danger of war is quite out of the question. No, it doesn't even say war, it says conflict—But here, in another sentence, it speaks of war—"

"Oh, never mind it, dear. Don't be afraid. Of course there will be an answer."

That's interesting: now it is his wife who connects their fate with that of the Court.

"Tell me, dear, has this anything to do with that murder?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"I haven't been reading the papers lately. Well, nothing serious will happen. And we don't need to bother about the Court. We'll go to Puj, have a nice little house and live happily ever after. What do we care about the Belgrade ambassador? Come, dear, let's go to bed—"

The next day, the Under Secretary did not receive him.

On the morning of the third day, he was at last permitted to see His Excellency. He handed him the deputy's letter.

"Your request strikes me as rather peculiar," the Secretary burst out nervously. "Don't misunderstand me, but at this moment, when the welfare of the Fatherland is at stake, when life and death—such petty affairs—"

He recovered only when he reached the street. People raced by him, pushing and jostling. They were all hurrying towards a near-by billboard. A billposter was just posting a placard. Not waiting for the poster to finish his work, they began to read it, avidly, eagerly, impatiently, loudly:

"General mobilization—"

He turned to an elderly gentleman who, it seemed, was also greatly interested in the poster and who seemed to know what it was all about:

"I beg your pardon, sir—If you don't mind—what does it mean, general mobilization?"

CHAPTER IV

THEY moved to Budapest and took a flat in a little side street near Kalvaria Square. They learned the argot of the war. They learned that there was a front and there was a hinterland. They were told that the hinterland was just as important as the front. They learned the slogans: Take care of your nerves. Be careful. Remain where you are. Everybody is expected to do his duty.

But he still had no duties whatsoever. He had nothing to do. The matter of the appointment, after the Secretary's negative answer, was dropped. The bureaux reduced their personnel. There was nothing to do.

He did not understand the whole thing. So many men were drafted, and yet there were no vacancies. All he got was fantastic advice. He was told, in a whisper, that it would be a good thing to get a job as a common labourer in Manfred Weisz's ammunition factory. That was as good as life insurance.

His life? He had not thought of that before. True, he had

been served with some sort of notice, he had been ordered to report for a medical examination. But—

He went to the *café* and joined the newspaper men at their table. He risked a question:

"How long will this war last?"

The newspaper men silently smoked their cigars, blew clouds of smoke in the air and did not answer.

A young man with spectacles turned to him.

"Well, the Thirty Years' War lasted for thirty years," he said, smiling, "The Seven Years' War, somewhat less.—Napoleon's wars—You never can tell—"

That evening, he had a discussion with his wife.

"It's impossible. I can't get anything, neither in public service nor with a private firm. They are all complaining. Every office is as full as if all the unemployed had been sent to Budapest, from the enemy countries, too. I don't know what's going on. They say everybody's been called up. But no one is missing. I can't understand this."

"We should have stayed in the country."

"Do you think it's any better in the country? Look, I should like to tell you something. What if the war lasted for a year?"

"Will that be good for us?"

"It's quite possible that I shall have to go too."

"Why do you bring that up again? Why do you worry? We have enough trouble, anyway."

"But, dear—if you look at history—well, the Thirty Years' War lasted for thirty years, the Seven Years' War—"

"But the Battle of Mohacs lasted for only one day! Am I right? And then—"

"That's all right, that's all right—I merely wanted to say that I—too—"

"Don't worry about that, dear. We have plenty of things to worry about."

He deliberately neglected to look for a job. The day of the medical examination was approaching, and the war showed no sign of ending. Some people said that peace would be signed by Christmas. But there were many who contended that it might even take a year.

One evening they went to the Eastern Terminus. Wounded soldiers were arriving: the first casualties. The streets round the railway station were crowded with people, and when the first ambulance arrived they showered the Red Cross wagons with flowers. The frenzied mob enthusiastically cheered the soldiers who lay pale and bloodless on their stretchers.

They, too, threw flowers and a few small packages of tobacco, just as they saw others do. Then, satisfied that they had done a good deal, they went home.

Volunteer legions were organized and rousing speeches were delivered on the terraces of the *cafés*. One day, they were caught by the desire for sacrifice. They went to an office on the second floor of a large building and exchanged their gold engagement rings for iron ones.

They were happy that day. In the evening, they took a walk on the Boulevard.

"Is that you, Neufeld? Look, there's Neufeld," she said and pointed out a soldier whose arm was in a sling.

They walked a few steps with Neufeld, in the cross-fire of the common envy of all the passers-by. Neufeld talked very little, but they were both extremely happy to have been permitted to walk with him.

"The Fatherland demands sacrifices," she remarked in a very lively tone, when they got home.

He felt a slight sensation of shame on account of Neufeld. Neufeld's arm was in a sling, people were proud to walk with him, he had no ordinary, everyday worries.

They used words at the supper table that evening which, he had thought, had already lost their meaning. He had thought that a word like "hero" had long been restricted to use in schoolbooks only. Neither of them had ever before spoken, for instance, of going to war.

Now his wife said: "The janitor's help has gone to war."

It's funny. In a side street near Kalvaria Square, on the third floor, where the tenants may beat their rugs only before ten in the morning, where one's next-door neighbours are a cab driver and a coal and wood merchant, one says: Charge. Attack. Heroic defence. We shed our blood. Battlefield. The janitor's help has gone to war.

The battlefield had become a lofty, a sublime conception. Everything connected with that forgotten, grey word had come to life and shone in glory.

One of his friends said to him that it would be a good idea to manufacture underwear for the Army. Indeed, to manufacture anything. A contractor could make a lot of money. Underwear or caps. Or tunics. It would be excellent business.

He looked at him as if he had suggested heresy. How could any one, in this heroic age of steel and blood, be so common, so vulgar?

But he was quite certain that they would not call him up. He had survived three medical examinations: he had never been found fit for military service. Flat feet, they said.

He considered the hunting of jobs a futile thing now. He thought he would get a job as soon as he was done with that medical examination. He was a little nervous, a little impatient; he wanted to have that business done with.

He was sitting in his *café* on the eve of his medical examination. Some one hurried in and told them there was a mass meeting in front of the *Café Baross*. The speakers, he said, glorified the war in glowing terms.

"At so much per day."

"It's quite possible that they are paid for it," some one remarked. "I had an interesting experience to-day. I was riding on a tram-car and there were three women in it. Three women in mourning. They began to talk. Near Oktogon Square. One of them was crying. Oh, my God, she sobbed, my poor, dear Kalman, my Kalman, I had nobody in the world but him. Says the second woman, Don't cry, the country needs the lives of our beloved. My only son has fallen in the war and yet I don't cry. Our losses are insignificant when the glory of the country is at stake. You should always think of that. Says the third woman. My husband is also lost, he's been taken prisoner by the Russians. Whereupon the first woman speaks up again, very contemptuously. Don't be so proud of that, my dear. Only those count who have died or who are wounded. All the rest are only slackers. Well, I was so absorbed in their talk that I forgot to get off, and suddenly I noticed that we had reached the last station. I

paid my fare again; I thought I might as well ride back on the same car. Then I saw that the women didn't get off either. They also paid their fares again. They didn't speak for a few minutes, then the first woman again began to cry, Oh, my God, oh, my poor, dear Kalman. Don't cry, lectured the other one, and they played the whole show all over again just as they had done it before—"

They listened to the story astonished, and looked around: had any one heard it? It might be bad for them to talk about such things. There was an old teacher with them, an old gentleman, who had been drinking his afternoon coffee with them for years. Now he waved their talk away with a disparaging gesture:

"Stuff and nonsense!"

"Why is it nonsense?"

"It's nonsense, my boy, because people don't read the philosophers of the French Revolution any more. If you had read Rousseau you'd know that this is just stuff and nonsense. It's nonsense because it is very stupid and flimsy, and it's nonsense because it isn't worth it to have three women on the pay-roll for the sake of a few people riding on one car. And it's nonsense because they don't need the people who hang around the streets, they need the multitudes. They need hundreds of thousands, they need millions—And it's nonsense because we've learned from Rousseau that might is right and might doesn't need the sentiments of the right honourable street and the opinion of a few loiterers. Right is might and might will use its right to take all of us, all of us, just as we sit here in the *café* and sip our coffee, and put us where it needs us. Do you think that when there aren't any more volunteers there won't be any soldiers either? Do you think that they will leave the malingerers and cowards at home just because they are inclined to hang back? If they don't succeed in persuading you when riding on tram-cars—do you think they won't bother with you any more? Charming, very charming! What simplicity! Yes, of course, my boy, they have nothing to do but pay wages to women in black to ride all day on tram-cars—"

CHAPTER V

THIS speech put him quite out of humour. It was a shade too brutal, it did not fit his previous experiences. It would have been much better had everything remained as it had been: flowers on Red Cross wagons, men with crutches laden with the fragrant petals of gratitude, singing volunteers, enthusiastic masses, marching soldiers, proudly beating hearts . . .

. . . They need multitudes, they need millions, and I can do nothing about it.

Of course, if everybody must go, I will go too, I will be there too. Who wants to shirk his duty? But to be ordered about and not even asked, to be considered a nonentity, not to be able to do anything about it! . . . Compulsion. Force. Curious.

This incident only introduced him to a bitter series of disappointments and destroyed illusions. His torn enthusiasm was brutally shaken time and again. Tired and suffering, he listened to the quietly debating newspaper men:

"There is a statue of Czar Peter the Great, in St. Petersburg: his extended hand points in the direction of Constantinople. That was Czar Peter's last will and testament. A beautiful and heroic gesture, and if they conquer the Dardanelles, the Russian landlords may safely continue their extensive system of land cultivation—"

"I beg your pardon—"

He interrupted them, excited and in despair:

"I beg your pardon—What has our revenge got to do with the Russians' extensive system of land cultivation?"

An evidently well-disposed young man tried to enlighten him:

"Oh, it has a lot to do. The revenge is of secondary importance now. What counts now is this: the Russian landlords, the big magnates, the men with hundreds of thousands of acres, need waterways to transport their crops cheaply—and the cheapest waterway is the Dardanelles—if it is in their possession."

"Well, and what if we beat the enemy on all fronts, everywhere, except at the Dardanelles?"

"Don't be so simple! There are other questions also."

"What, for instance! What other questions?"

"Well, how about the colonies? the eastern markets for German drygoods? the Russian cotton? the coal-fields?"

He could bear it no longer. He rose and went home.

She was still awake. Anxiety was tormenting her fresh young features as she offered her lips for him to kiss.

"Dear—your examination—to-morrow—"

"To-morrow—"

"But you've never been a soldier."

"I haven't. But—"

"But—you have the privilege of being a volunteer—haven't you?"

"I have. Yes. But—what do you think—what does that mean?"

"Well—if you want to go, you go, and if you don't—"

"Oh, no, dear. It means nothing but that I'll be an officer some day—that is to say—I may become an officer."*

"And if you don't want to go, will you have to go just the same?"

"Why, certainly. There's a war on. And then again, the Fatherland demands that everybody shall do his duty—"

"And the men who have families will not be exempted from service?"

"Of course not. But, dear, let's not talk about that. If I have to go, I'll go. I'll be there with the rest of them. But we don't need to worry about it now. I was examined three times and they never found me fit for service. My good old flat feet—"

*Translator's Note: In the late Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, all University and college graduates, also all graduates of *Gymnasiums*, *Real Schools* and other secondary schools preparing for Universities, were privileged to serve, in peace time, one year as aspirants for a commission in lieu of the compulsory three years' service for all others. Aspirants were permitted to report (volunteer) for active service, within certain limitations, at their own convenience, while all others were bound to report at the age of 21. These volunteer aspirants, colloquially called volunteers, were detailed, after a preliminary military training, to Reserve Officers'

"What's flat feet?"

"That means that I can't march. Soldiers have to march and I can't. I'd only be a drawback to the whole business. Whenever I walk, my feet hurt. It's too sad, but I can't participate in the heroic fight."

"Especially when you have a family—I'm sure they won't be very severe on you—It's beautiful, I can't deny it, it's very beautiful, but it isn't for men with families. And, then, you have flat feet also. Why, there are so many soldiers whose business is war—what do they call them?"

"Regulars."

"Yes, of course. They ought to be enough. And the young men. They'll surely be enough."

"I hope so . . "

It was still dark when his wife woke him up the next morning.

"Why so early? What shall I do so early in the morning?"

"I thought it'd be good for you to get up now. To get dressed and go out a bit—to walk a little—If you'd walk a couple of hours—"

"Why should I walk at dawn?"

"You said your feet get swollen if you walk a lot—"

"Well, and suppose my feet do get swollen?"

"Then your flat feet will show more. You know, that was the reason they didn't take you before—"

He had exchanged his golden ring for an iron one, he had given flowers and tobacco to wounded soldiers, he had yelled: Long live the war! He had been proud to walk with Neufeld whose arm had been in a sling. The first thing he had looked up in the paper every morning had been the official *communiqués*. And, well, it couldn't be denied, he had been enthusiastic, he had flung his hat in the air, he had cheered. And now, now he—now he was to bring up his flat feet as an excuse?

Training Schools, whence they graduated as Aspirants or First Class Aspirants, ranks approximately equal to those of Sergeants and Sergeant-Majors. In the late War, these courses usually lasted three months. After a short service at the front, usually lasting from three to six months, aspirants were appointed Cornets, and after six more months, they received commissions as Second Lieutenants. Cornets, however, were regarded as commissioned officers.

Yes, yes, he too had used heroic words, he too had said: battlefield. He too had cried: victory. He too had shouted victory, courage, victory, courage—What was this, anyway?

He began to dress. He did not want to tell his wife anything about his thoughts, he did not want to provoke an argument. All right, she was right.

He was dressed. He thought he might go to an all-night *cafe*, sit down, have a cup of coffee and wait.

No, he would not go to the *café* now. First he would take a walk, in the fresh air of the early morning. He had had a cup of coffee at home already, why go to the *café?* He would instead, walk for a while.

He walked over to the Western Terminus. Then he turned about and went to the Eastern Terminus. At the Eastern Terminus, he turned once more, walked down Rákoczi Avenue and Kossuth Lajos Street and crossed the Danube to Buda. Then he followed the quay to the Chain Bridge. There he stopped and took a deep breath.

He blushed. What was this? Flat-foot training? To bring out the swelling? To make the pain in his feet visible?

He looked at his watch. It was only six o'clock.

He climbed Fortress Hill, then with a considerable detour, he marched over to Sváb Hill. Now he turned back and, *via* Margit Bridge and the Boulevard, he marched back to József Boulevard, to the building where the examination took place. He arrived there at nine o'clock, breathing heavily, with a slight pain in his ankles.

As soon as he arrived he was called in.

He stepped to the measuring rod all naked.

A sergeant shouted out his height.

An officer with spectacles, most probably an army physician, without even rising from his seat, merely slightly turning his head, from a distance of some eight feet, in a grey, colourless, indifferent voice, as if he were reading it from a sheet of paper, said:

"Fit for service."

He felt very embarrassed: standing there all naked among gentlemen of his kind. But something cut into his flesh: perhaps that conversation of the night before concerning the

Dardanelles and the Russian wheat. Or was it the argument with his wife about his privilege of being a volunteer? Something flamed up within him. After all, he had a wife and a small child. If he were alone he wouldn't do it. But he had duties toward his family. It was painful and embarrassing, but he had to do it.

But he was annoyed because he was naked.

He stepped to the surgeon and bowed.

"If you please, doctor—I have flat feet—Look—"

And he lifted his leg.

The surgeon bent nearer. For a second only. He replied almost at once.

"Yes, slightly—You may request to be assigned to the cavalry—Do you want to serve in the cavalry?"

He couldn't answer. What should he answer? "Beautiful Hussar, beautiful Hussar"—he heard the old song ground out by an invisible hand-organ. And when they gave him a piece of paper, he started to slip it into his trousers pocket, only to notice again that he was naked.

So he had become a soldier. "*Hadnagy uram, hadnagy uram! Mi bajod van, édes fiam?*" he recited to himself the first two lines of the ballad he had learned when ten years old.

It was amazing—how all Strindbergian problems had vanished of a sudden, and the immortal Codex of the Emperor Justinian, and the superb logic of the philosophers, and the tormenting problem of next month's rent, and the odds on the Great Autumn Handicap, and the huge library with the bay window he had wanted all his life.

Terrible!

He met his wife on the street, near their home. She had been, with their son, to the market. They began to wave their hands when they noticed him. They laughed. But he, with an ashen-grey determination, dryly hurled it at them:

"I am called up."

CHAPTER VI

THE little boy begged to be taken in his arms, his wife dropped the basket. Pain twitched her features, she gazed at

him with wide-open eyes. Her clean, healthy laughter degenerated into a grimace. She leaned against the wall and stared at him. Tears came into her eyes.

"Did you tell them about your flat feet?" she asked in a wooden voice.

He did not answer. What could be answer? Yes, my dear, I told them about the flat feet but they did not take it into consideration, what do you say to that, what an injustice! Forward, patriots! . . .

When they reached their flat, she took her purchases to the kitchen. Then she came into the living-room. She sat down, and silently, rigidly, gazed straight in front of her. Those big eyes of hers stared into the distance. She kept silent.

The little boy began to sing, in his thin, childish voice, to the beat of marching soldiers:

Piszkáld ki, piszkáld ki,
Piszkáld ki belöle—

She slowly lifted her eyes to him. She rose, went to the child and said to him gently, with sorrow in her voice:

"Don't sing, my son, don't sing now."

She sat down on the sofa, then, all of a sudden, she threw herself upon it and began to sob.

"Look here, my dear—it isn't sure yet—why, the war may be over soon—the papers say that only five per cent. die—and those who die of diseases are included in the five per cent.—Don't cry, please—don't cry—After all—in feudal times—why don't you listen to me?—well, under the feudal system—it was a prerogative to be a soldier—an extraordinary privilege—the bourgeoisie have only recently—"

He wanted to explain to her how it had been in the days of feudalism, and how the bourgeoisie had only recently acquired the privilege of sacrificing their blood. But he mixed it all up, indeed, he was not quite sure of it himself. As a matter of fact, the historic truth made little difference—it did not calm her, this feudalistic business was no good at all . . .

"And, you see, I don't have to go yet—I have at least three months before—And peace will be signed by Christmas They only want to insure themselves—"

Yes, that was it. He had not thought of it before. He did not have to go at once. Of course. He decided to find out all about this at once.

He took his hat and went. He expected to come home with good news. He hurried to an acquaintance, a soldier. A lucky fellow, he was, he had been wounded in the hand during the first week. Now he could stay at home until the end of the war. They said that those who had already done their duty once would not be called upon to risk their lives again. He was now serving in a military warehouse and was proudly walking the streets in his uniform. He was held in great esteem. With his sword at his side, he gallantly and jauntily walked the pavements of Budapest.

"I have just been called up. I'd like to know a few things —a little information—If you'd be so kind—"

"Why, certainly! Of course—Well, don't you be afraid. Only, take great care to have good, warm socks with you all the time. Take your own along. Always have chocolate on you. You may throw away everything but never your chocolate. Beware of the water—"

"Why the water?"

"Take care what you drink. Always have a little boiled water in your flask. Don't drink from ditches, or from a spring you don't know—"

"Look here, I've never been a soldier, I don't know anything, I haven't the slightest idea how these things go. Are you just simply taken to the front and put in the line? I've never had a military rifle in my hand."

"Of course not. First, they'll drill you. They'll teach you."

"Until I know everything?"

"Until you know everything. But you don't need to be afraid of that. In time of war, those who are clever are trained in six weeks. Incidentally, you have the privilege of being a volunteer, haven't you?"

"Yes, I have. Tell me, what does it mean precisely, this volunteer business?"

"Well, you'll be sent to an officers' training school. You'll become an officer. If you pass out of the training school, you get a commission when you reach the front."

"Are there any examinations?"

"Of course there are."

"And is it possible to fail?"

"Why, certainly it is. But don't let the idea of an exam worry you. They don't care so much for formalities nowadays as they used to. You simply beg to be sent to the front as soon as you are trained and, out there, you'll get your commission after your first act of bravery, or after the first attack. And then you are a gentleman. You get quite decent pay. You have an orderly. You don't have to carry a pack. You eat in the officers' mess—"

He did not understand a word of it. Mess, chocolate, orderly—

The tension of expectation had lasted for several months. Now it was over. He did not need a job any more. Under Secretary of Justice, future—all were gone.

The newspapers were full of war bulletins, the show windows with electric signs. Portraits of unknown soldiers glorified by electric bulbs. He went home without any good news, without any unexpected morsel of happiness. What will he say to his wife when he gets home? What?

"Imagine, three battalions have crossed the Stryj—"

Or:

"The contractors who delivered paper-soled shoes are convicted—"

Or:

"Count Tisza declared in the House that the Russian advance in the Carpathians is merely an episode. Even if the Russians reached Szolnok, it would be nothing but an episode—"

What should he tell the crying eyes, what should he present to despair, how should he cure the burning, open, questioning wounds?

From home, from the little village in the Carpathian Mountains, interesting news had come to him. He could not very well tell it to his wife, but he had been pondering over it quite often.

In the council room of Ogocsa County, the governor had tried to calm the excited councillors, for news of the battle

in the Carpathians had already crossed the county borders. The governor had repeated Count Tisza's words:

"And even if the Russians reach Szolnok, don't worry. In this war of nations it would amount to nothing but an episode—"

Whereupon one of the councillors quietly remarked:

"Well—if my colt is dead, what does he care for even the greenest of grass?"

Of course. He was called up. He was a soldier now. He would go to war. He would fight. Chocolate? Future? Boiled water? If my colt is dead—

But his fate was settled at last. He was taken care of. He was insured. He had employment. But what would happen to her? And to the child?

Oh, yes, the government helped the families of those who were called up. Enthusiasm! They shouted: A soldier's wife —a soldier's son!

He thought of going home to the old folks, to his parents, to talk it over with them. What to do. He heard somewhere that the railways carried soldiers free of charge. And their families. The State wanted to decrease the population of the capital. He went to the office where they gave out the free railway tickets. He entered the room proudly, a little haughtily:

"I am going to the war. I want a free railway pass," he said loudly.

He thought they would be courteous and flattering; he thought they would be infinitely polite; he thought they would hurriedly, obligingly and immediately give him the tickets. "I am going to the war."

A number of well dressed young ladies were in the office. Several smart, healthy, active gentlemen. They were writing, registering, turning pages, issuing orders, talking. He was sent from one desk to another, he filled in long questionnaires. They asked him questions, unpleasant and very personal questions. They asked him why he desired to have a free pass.

"I am going to the war," he answered angrily.

"Yes," said a lady, and put it down: "drafted."

As if she had written: double-breasted suit, two buttons.

At last he got a third-class ticket. They gave it to him with a gesture that seemed to mean: "Here, poor man, take it but that's all, we don't want to see you now for a year—"

Should he entrust his family to these people? Would these take care of his child? These?

He tore up the ticket. He threw it away. Now he knew what to do.

The family would go home to his parents. They would stay with them to the end. Until he came home from the war. Or—well, if he died, it wouldn't make any difference, anyway.

At home he began to broach the subject to her:

"Look here, dear—A few more days and I'll have to go—What will you do? We can't do anything about it—can't change it—I can't help it—"

Why did he stammer? To the point!

"All this is just silly talk—that it will be over by Christmas—or next Spring. You will stay with my parents. You and the boy. As long as I am away—"

They took their furniture to a warehouse in Aggteleki Street which had been advertising in the newspapers for some time: special rates to soldiers. They spent their last night in Budapest in a hotel, their flat was already empty.

They had decided to go home together. He would go to his depot from there. He borrowed 200 *kronen* at eight per cent. and gave the furniture as security. He was to pay back the loan only at the end of the war, when redeeming the furniture.

They lived well on the last day. They bought everything they thought the little family would need in a small village. In one of the shops, they offered him a sweater. A nice, warm, knitted sweater. He bought it. He put it on immediately, in the shop.

She was surprised:

"What do you need that for?"

CHAPTER VII

THERE were still a few more days, before joining the colours. This sounded a little cocky to him: joining the colours. And that other expression so frequently used, going to the war, seemed snobbish. He used to say: when I go—But his relatives said: "Next week, you'll join your regiment." For the time being, they were at home, in his parents' house, in the little Carpathian village. Everybody was proud of him, proud that he was about to join the colours. Except his mother and his wife. Nor did either of them say anything about "joining the colours."

On his last day at home, late in the afternoon, his mother, in a curiously assured voice, called him to her bedroom. How charming it was, that bedroom! How far one could see from its windows! As far as the Vécsey Forest. The sun had not yet set. The field was dotted with small pools of water and they were red. The windows had iron bars. It was possible that he would never see that room again. The bedroom of his parents. The white lace bedspread. The old inlaid chest of drawers.

"My son—"

"Yes, mother—"

"My son, don't worry about anybody but yourself. Your family will be well taken care of—"

"Do you think, mother, that it will be over soon?"

"I don't think so, my son. Wars always last long. I know how long Wallenstein's wars lasted. I remember, when I was a girl, I heard them shout on the market place, at Nagyvárad: Napoleon taken prisoner—There was always a war. There were always wars. And all lasted long—"

"But what about this, mother—how shall I take care of myself? How can any one look out for himself on the battlefield?"

His mother's great assurance cooled him off a bit. He deliberately chose the word "battlefield" to hurt her—

His mother continued in a serious and determined tone:

"My son, you know how to look out for yourself. You will come home. But it is important that you should not worry about your family. Look out for yourself only. I don't worry about you."

Unheard of! Does his mother think that—

"Mother, do you think that I'll be a bad soldier? that I'll be a slacker?"

"No, my son, God forbid! I don't think that you'll be a bad soldier. You will be a good soldier. You were a good son, you are a good father, you will be a good soldier. Whatever you do, you always know where you are. You must go. But you will come home. When the time comes, you will come home, able, healthy. It is your duty. My dear son—dearest—"

Tears were slowly dripping from her eyes. She was crying.

This moved him. He was touched.

"Don't cry, mother dear. You're right. I will come home."

"I don't cry for you, my son, I cry for your brother."

Unheard of! This sentence infuriated him.

"But, mother—mother dear—What do you mean?—Why he isn't even a soldier!—What's the matter with my brother? Why, he is exempt!"

"I know, my son—He is exempt now—But for how long? How long?"

That's amazing. He had to go, he had to go to war, and his mother cried for his exempted brother.

"Listen, my son—Your brother is a stubborn man—He can't adapt himself. He doesn't know how to take care of himself—I don't know what's going to happen to him."

"But he is not a soldier."

"That doesn't mean anything—How long is he going to keep out of it?"

He tried to control himself, but he burst out:

"And I, how shall I take care of myself? How shall I take care of myself on the battlefield? under fire, among enemy bullets? In battle—how shall I take care of myself?"

His mother looked at him, with infinite kindness, and said, very tenderly:

"I don't know, my son. But you will know. Your poor brother—"

And she cried again.

Next morning, when the coach drove up, anger had still not wholly left him. We shall see. We shall see—When the news comes: In the defence of the Fatherland—When the telegram comes. He wished he could be at home when the telegram came, the telegram informing them that their beloved son had been killed defending the Fatherland.—His father, too, got into the coach, having decided to accompany him to the depot. He knew already that the place where he was to report was called the depot. He took leave of them and everybody cried. But the memory of the scene the night before dried his tears. Of course, he was going on an excursion only. And he would take care of himself. No, he wouldn't catch a cold. And he would write. Regularly. Of course. He would know how to get about. On the battlefield. At the front. In the line. In attacks. He would adapt himself. Naturally.

They were already on the highway when they met a man walking barefooted in the melting snow. He could hardly drag himself along in the mud of the road.

"He is going too," his father said.

He recognized in the barefooted man the son of his father's old shepherd. He was of the same age. Old Csutor's son.

Old Csutor had been an important figure of his childhood. Csutor had not been his name, only a nickname. When he had been small, old Csutor had often taken him in his lap. He had played for him on his long, peculiarly shaped flute. He had made swings for him, behind the barn. On Sundays he had brought him hazelnuts from the forest.

He stopped the coach.

His father did not like to give a ride to anybody.

But he said nothing now. Although he knew what his son wanted.

"Are you also going to your regiment, János?"

"Yes."

"How many children have you got, János?"

"Five."

"To the Halmi station, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, come along with us."

Awkward and timid, János climbed into the coach. Before he sat down, he shook the mud off his feet.

"János, how did you think you could get to the train in time on foot?"

"I'd have reached one of them in time."

"Don't you know that you have to report with shoes?"

"Well, if they don't like me as I am, they'll send me home."

"What did your wife say? your children?"

"They were glad."

Stubborn man. Cynical. He was not even grateful for the ride. He did not know how to adapt himself. Hm! This fellow had no chance—

His father began to tell him something, in a trembling voice. But it was obvious he was thinking of something else. The old man forced himself to appear nonchalant, as if it had been quite natural to him to accompany his son to the train, to the depot, on his way to the war.

"You know, my son, that happened in the days when they used to catch soldiers with rope. And, you know, over there, near Pusztahegy, Avrám Farkas—"

"Tell me, father. Mother says I know how to adapt myself. But I was not very well off in Budapest. Now how could I have got into this situation had I known how to adapt myself? If I had known—"

"Yes, mother says so—She always says so—"

"Am I so irresponsible?"

"I always thought you were a little irresponsible, but mother used to say that you only took it easy. But you know how to—"

"Well, if I am irresponsible—"

"No, no, it's different with you. Mother says—"

"Is it so certain that I shall come home?"

His father's, his old father's, eyes were suddenly filled with tears. He cried aloud, tormented, in despair. He was bathed in tears, he breathed heavily. He turned his back on his son, leaned against the window of the coach. He suffered.

At last. So the return is not so certain.

"Mother said she was worried for my brother,"

His father took his handkerchief from his eyes.

"What did mother say?"

"That the war would last a very long time, that my brother might be called up too, that she was worried for him."

His father was a rational man. He did not believe in miracles, he explained the Bible in terms of natural laws, logical deductions, materialistic arguments. He considered the religious customs the results of economic necessities. He often quoted brilliant passages from Goethe's "Faust" and from Schiller's poems. He considered Heine merely pleasant reading.

Now he had become serious. He very nearly considered it a bad joke. He disapproved of it.

"What do you mean, your brother? He isn't even a soldier. He is exempt. What could happen to your brother?"

This supposition, concerning his younger son, was so much outside the territory of logic that it sobered him. It made him nervous, rather. It was evident that his wife's transcendental deduction disturbed the old man. Here was his soldier boy, he was going to war: if they were to worry for anybody they ought to worry for him. The other one was exempt. He went on talking. About the official *communiqués*. He said it would be over soon. There were definite proofs. Beyond the shadow of a doubt. It simply could not be carried on any longer. One month more. Two at the most. Why, statistics proved that we had not enough food and supplies for more than a year. Nor men.

CHAPTER VIII

HE had been living in a sort of inexplicable chaos for several days. Soldiering had given him the impression of a country fair, a mart. He had met scores of acquaintances and all had given him advice. All had pulled him aside, all had whispered, all had let him into important secrets. All had told him to look out, to take care, had pointed out the importance of pulling strings ; all had

known some one who could "wangle" things. He could not understand them at all. His head was full of war bulletins, electric signs, memories of the capital. Hold out till the final victory. Our brave soldiers. Silver medal for bravery in action, second class. Bloody sacrifices. Gold for iron. He had expected a swift current of heroism to carry him along, he had expected the phraseology of the newspapers, the sentimentality of the schoolbooks, to come to life. Instead, he had been benevolently reminded that a heart-to-heart talk with the sergeant-major would be very advantageous, he might get better clothing. Also, that it would be a good idea to see the regimental surgeon and talk with him. That the captain was a good man. He could not comprehend why it was so important that the captain was a good man. What did it mean anyway. "The captain is a good man?"

He would be drilled and then sent to the front. He could not imagine that it could possibly happen differently. He had one day more as a civilian, but the whole regiment was already his friend, everybody interfered in his affairs. Everybody talked about something else. No one ever mentioned that there was a war going on, that they needed his enthusiasm, his self-sacrifice, his devotion. Instead, the surgeon would give him a day's leave any time he asked for it, there would be no drill for him that day. What did that mean? Why should the surgeon give him a day's leave? What did one day matter? And what of all the drills in the world? War, battle, bullets. The Fatherland is in danger. Who cared for one day? What should he do with one day? Wife, child and everything—what could he do in one day? The sergeant-major would give him good clothing. Why should he give him anything better? Whatever he gets will be all right. He must fight—not dress. Who cares for such things in these days? Then: the captain was a good man. Of course, he was a good man. He must be a good man. He would fight with them, suffer hardships with them, share their fate, risk death. Most probably he was a good man, and he would give them a thorough training. He was informed that if he asked for it he would be allowed to live in a hotel and not in the barracks.

And that he could also get leave to eat outside. These things he regarded as ridiculous.

These men remained what they had been: peddlers. Even those who had been different degenerated to their level. Tens of thousands groaned with pain in the Carpathians, tens of thousands were drowned in the marshes of Volhynia—and he was to ask permission for extra food. And extra room.

The day before he put on his uniform he sent his father home. The old man cried and embraced him several times. Yes, this was different. This was human. This leave-taking, this crying, this lamentation. These befitted the great days, and not the gossip in the *cafés*. Or the day's leave. And the "talk" with the captain in order to wheedle privileges out of him, on the ground that he was a university graduate.

He did not go anywhere, and next morning, in the fort, when he joined the recruits standing in line for clothing, the sergeant dealing out the uniforms looked at him in amazement. He did not even give him clothes. Instead, he pulled him aside and told him in a low tone:

"Wait at the end of the line—"

When it was over, the sergeant came up to him and took him to the other end of the fort where several recruits in civilian clothes had already been waiting for him. All of them gave money to the sergeant and, thereupon they received fairly good uniforms, clean, new boots, new underwear. He remembered that the peasant recruits were given patched-up rags, shoes with holes in the soles. He was ashamed of himself that even now, at this hour, he lowered himself to accept such favours. But he did not protest. He paid, like the rest of them, and went with the men with influence to ask permission to live outside, to eat outside.

He considered them base and painful, unworthy of the times and events, these dishonourable subterfuges.

They told him how long some of the men had been at home. That this man was not ill at all, that the other fellow had dug himself in so thoroughly at the office that he would never go to the front, no matter how long the war lasted. One managed to get something in the dispensary, another

had become a permanent orderly, a third an eternal office-manager, a fourth had settled down as the director of amateur theatrical entertainments, a fifth had simulated some type of cramp, a sixth had been wounded in battle. This last man was not respected either. In fact, he was the object of more gossip than any of the others. They said his wound had healed a long time ago.

He felt sympathy only for this man.

Well, what if his wound had already healed? He had been out there. He had suffered. He had risked his life. How could they speak in such a disgraceful manner of him? of him who had already stood face to face with Death? He was the only hero among them all. He was the only man who was a man.

Punctual, accurate, an expert. He heard praises such as these. He could not grasp their meaning. What was this: a grocery store? A soldier should be a soldier. Let him be inaccurate, ignorant, careless, as long as he is ready to fight in the front line, to charge without regard to the dangers surrounding him, to attack enthusiastically. His job is to hold his bayonet fast and thrust. Why does he need to be an expert?

One day he met Csutor's son. The son of their old shepherd. Another platoon was attached to his company and Csutor's son was in that platoon. He was very glad to see him again but Csutor's son was rather sour.

"You see, we did get together after all. Now we'll go to the front together."

"No, we won't go together."

"No? Are you suggesting that I shan't go to the front?"

"Not at all. Only, I am sure to go this week."

"And you think I shan't be sent out?"

"Of course you will. But that won't be this week. I shan't be sent to the officers' training school, I shan't get a commission, I've been trained already, there is nothing to postpone my going."

That was true, he considered it an injustice.

He went to drill with Csutor's son only once.

The next day, Csutor's son was transferred to the reinforcement troops. He got new clothing, new shoes, new underwear.

The poor boy got those things free of charge, unlike myself. The ranks in a draft get them without any influence. Perhaps even extra food.

But Csutor's son had been right. One day there came an order that the volunteers should be drilled separately. Then, after a few weeks, there came a new order: they were sent to the non-commissioned officers' training school. Then they were transferred to an officers' training school. In the morning they went to the drill ground, in the afternoon, to class. They sat on school benches, they were asked questions, they had to study. He had to work hard. He heard that they were to have examinations. That they might even fail.

And if he failed he would not be sent to the front? It was painful to think of that possibility.

He had thought that there would be parades and flying colours. And showers of flowers, and proud marches, and daring and dauntless gestures.

Instead, they were sitting on school benches, listening to lectures. The spirit of classrooms pervaded them. There were some who regularly avoided school. Shirkers, who stole away from class and went to the theatre instead, who went to the *cafés* without leave, who made fun of the teacher, a captain. They joked at the expense of a hero with medals on his chest, spread malicious gossip about the captain, the captain with two medals. They said that neither of them was a medal for bravery; one was a decoration commemorating an anniversary, and the other one was given to every regular officer after a certain number of years of service. That was what the impertinent puppies said.

One evening he was put on guard duty. Hall guard, or something like that. At night, as he stood guard in the hall, in the great silence he took the rifle off his shoulder and, with fixed bayonet, he stared, tremblingly watchful, at the door of the classroom. Thus he stood, at night, with a rifle in his hand. He clenched the butt in his fists—yes, this was more like it—It refreshed him, it animated him, this two hours' service with arms. At last. He had never felt thus before. Yes, he had. On the day when his civilian worries had ceased of a sudden, as if by magic. That had been genuine salvation.

Then, all at once, he had soared above pettiness. Then Fate had lifted from his shoulders the cross of grey troubles. It had given him a feeling of great relief. Now he was again in a mess of incomprehensible things, in a mess of inexplicable things. Classroom lessons, cramming, studies, lectures. Out there Big Berthas bellowed and hussars charged at Limanowa—And here he had to recite lessons. He had to prepare home-work, and they gave him marks. It was possible to fail in an exam. I failed in the geography examination in the tenth month of the World War, at the age of thirty-two. Thus he would answer his grandchildren when they asked him about the war.

And there were inspections, too, just as in the *Gymnasium*. There came a colonel one day. The District Superintendent of Schools. Edouard Ritter von Szieber. In uniform. And he questioned him:

"Behaviour in the face of the enemy?"

That was the question. Yes, how does one behave before the enemy?

No. He had never heard about that. He had not been in class when the teacher spoke of it. He became bitter. He flew into a rage. He could not imagine what his answer was supposed to be. On the battlefield?—In the distance, a small forest — Russian soldiers are coming towards him from behind a wood—he is now before the enemy—his heart is beating fast, his muscles are taut—Behaviour before the enemy—

"I shoot at him, kill him—"

The colonel frowned. The captain teacher was angry. He got an "F." He had no chance to improve his marks. He was ploughed in the presence of the District Superintendent. He was already on his bench when he heard some one fluently reciting:

"—whoever throws away his arms and ammunition before the enemy—"

What was that? Did he have to learn that from books? to throw away arms and ammunition before the enemy?—Hang the scoundrel, stick him up in front of a firing squad—This volunteer had also guessed wrong. The next one, at

last, knew it. He said:

"The offender shall be quartered in sight of the troops."

And those who did not know this would not be qualified to defend their country? Apparently they would not.

CHAPTER IX

AT last, school came to an end. He was even promoted to the rank of corporal. There was only one more field practice to be endured. He was neither among the first nor among the last. He had had very bad marks in topography, but his official letters saved him. They found that the letters most in conformity with Army Regulations throughout the entire course had been his. Blood flowed freely around Verdun, and mountains of flour soaked in petrol burned all over Europe, cities were consumed by fire, and bayonets played hide-and-seek in the throats of clerks, farmers' skulls were pierced by steel splinters, there were three children lost in the evacuation of a village and one of them was trampled to death by a horse. Machine-guns mowed down endless lines of men, small nails were dropped from aeroplanes and went straight through shepherds—but his official letters were the most correct of all, and they had saved him. He had become an aspirant, and the experts told him that after a few weeks at the front he would be promoted again. He would be appointed to a higher rank, a rank accompanied with higher pay and privileges.

But there was one more practice still to go through. He was informed that its outcome would have no effect on the marks. He could not possibly make his marks worse. It would be merely a sort of show. They were to show what they had learned. But they were to work wholeheartedly, they were to make the show a success.

The practice was scheduled to begin early, at dawn. The night before, he was sitting in his *café*. They told him there that a relative of his had arrived in the afternoon and had been looking for him all over the town. The relative had left a message for him, he had asked him to wait, under any

circumstance. When he came, he embraced him nervously; he was visibly upset. He had no idea what the relative wanted. The relative began to explain to him that what he was doing was the most foolish thing on earth. That he deliberately sought disaster. Why didn't he think of himself? of his family? Why didn't he try to save himself somehow? He owed this to his family, his parents, his future.

"But what can I do?"

He ought to talk to the surgeon. The relative had already seen him. They would take him out of the reinforcement troops, would keep him here for a while, would discover that he was suffering from some sort of disease—He would gain time.

"You can't do that without money—I don't know how one goes about it—I don't know—"

He said this very hesitantly, he could not feel the responsibility.

"Of course, you need money. It was stupid of you not to ask for some from home, but I'll give you enough. I'll get it back from the family. You'll write and tell them to pay it back to me."

"Well, and all I have to do is to give it to the surgeon?"

"Yes, I've told you, he knows all about it. I've seen him already. Just hand it over to him, quite calmly. It's unheard of, this negligence—You have got to go immediately."

The relative gave him a big, blue banknote of high denomination and urged him to go at once, to act immediately, before it was too late. It was silly, not to do anything. It was lucky that he had heard of it at the last minute. It was possible that, in another week, he would be already on his way to the front. Let's go, let's go. The two of them started out toward the surgeon's house.

So he did it, after all.

Here he was now, stealing through side-alleys, trying to cheat, to deceive, at a time when clerks were stabbed with bayonets and the frozen feet of cobblers broke off from blackened legs like rotting branches, when light signals blinked between sentries and janitors groaned with pain. With a big blue banknote in his pocket, he was stealing

through dark streets now—in the very shadow of the bastions whence four centuries before, Katica Dobó and the women of Eger showered scalding hot tar upon the heads of the charging Turks.

His mother had been right. And he had thought she had insulted him! The relative dropped in, handed over a blue banknote and he forthwith proceeded to adapt himself. He knew how to go about it. Had his mother expected *this* of him? Had she known him so well? It was a mistake—a great mistake—He would stop this, this whole organization, this machine, conceived for no other purpose than to degrade him. For no other purpose than to bring about his moral death. Poor mother. Mother, dear, you don't know me, no, you don't—

He turned to the relative and asked him to wait for a second.

He entered a tobacconist's shop and asked for a packet of cheap cigarettes. He paid with the big blue banknote. They smiled. It was too big, they couldn't change it. You'll pay for it to-morrow, Mr. Aspirant. Oh, no, no, I don't want to carry it about all night. Give me a receipt for it and I'll leave it here until to-morrow morning. Well, we can do that for you.

He left the shop, with a cheap cigarette in his mouth, happy, merry, contented, light-hearted. He wished he could wave a greeting to the tall, dark bastion, but such nonsense was out of the question. He could not be so foolish in the presence of his relative.

They were stealing through dark side streets, but he was no longer depressed. It was just a pleasant walk in the night, and he was slyly watching the anxious and obliging relative. He would get back his big blue banknote to-morrow.

Dear mother—how little you know me—How little! Well, what do you say *now?* My dear, my only mother, aren't you worried for me *now?* Do you still think that you don't have to worry for me? I have no blue banknote with me, I can't bribe the doctor *now!*

The relative stopped and whispered something. This is the surgeon's house. Go in and ring the bell. An orderly will

come out. Tell him your name, he will let you in. The rest is easy.

It happened precisely that way. The surgeon came out and was visibly surprised when he saw him. He was too surprised. He had already seen the surgeon, but only in the barracks. The situation was rather awkward: his disciplined military morals stiffened his legs, forced him to "attention." No matter how nonchalantly the tunic hung on the surgeon's shoulders there were two golden stars on its collar, denoting his rank—he was timid and clumsy. The surgeon showed him in.

"What can I do for you?" the doctor asked him, coldly, with hardened features.

"Please, sir, my relative told me that he had already talked to you—"

"What relative?"

"Haven't you seen my relative?"

"I don't know your relations, Aspirant."

The surgeon's severe voice sobered him up. He rose. He was standing to "attention." He did not know what sort of joke it was, but he wished he could be out of it as soon as possible. If only the matter would not get any more complicated. He stood there stiff and soldierlike.

"I beg your pardon, sir, some one played a joke on me. I am sorry. Please excuse me," he said formally.

The surgeon's features mellowed.

"That's all right, my boy," he said pleasantly, "I don't even ask you who played the joke on you. I'll forget all about it. Don't get excited, Aspirant. It's nothing."

He tumbled out. In the hall, his eyes were caught by an object. What's this?

In the hall, placed against the wall, there was a walking-stick. But there was only one such stick in the world. Its handle was a curly-haired Negro of silver. With movable eyes. There was only one such cane. A cane like that. He knew it well. Its owner was the proprietor of a forest in their neighbourhood. His farm was a few miles from his father's. His son had been called up a short time ago. He had played with this cane twenty years ago, they didn't make canes like

that nowadays. How did it get here? He picked it up. Tried it. The silver Negro's eyes winked at him in a friendly way. Of course. This was the stick. It had the well-known initials. Of course, that was it. Why, certainly. It belonged to the owner of the forest. And his son had just been called up. He was now in the room with the surgeon.

He turned back and knocked on the door. The surgeon stuck his head out, rather nervously.

"What do you want now, Aspirant?"

"If you please, doctor—I have something important to tell you—Just for a second—"

The surgeon anxiously listened to him.

"Doctor, a boy I know, from my town, has just been called up. I don't know what's going to happen to him, but his father's stick is here in the hall. I'll watch the boy, I'll watch what's going to happen to him. And you shouldn't have left the stick in the hall—"

The surgeon's face turned grey. He rushed out, brought in the cane and gave it to an invisible person in another room. Then he turned to him, and, staring at him, silently asked him:

"What do you want of me?"

"I don't want anything. Have you seen my relative?"

"I have—"

"Have you promised him—"

"I have—"

"And—now—?"

"Well—He didn't tell me that you were an aspirant.—But, please—whenever you want a day's leave—when you don't want to go to drill—"

"And the boy in there?"

"He's a private. Who cares for him? And he has a huge rupture—I wish you could see his rupture—Believe me—really—please, look at it—it's frightful—believe me—"

He turned his back on the surgeon and left him.

"Can't be done," he said to the relative. "I'll give back your money at the tobacconist's. It's there. The surgeon said you hadn't told him that I was an aspirant. That I had gone to the officers' school. Can't be done. Impossible."

Lucky that he hadn't had the blue banknote with him. It had been beautiful, the way it had happened. Not even a chance to—It had not been a failure; he had prevented the possibility of a failure in advance. He could not blame himself now.

Was this what his mother had meant? that he always knew what to do? that his instinct would always tell him how to proceed? Had it been wise, in this particular instance, to renounce all possibilities of success in advance? Or had it been merely luck? Had it been the instinct of a weakling or the sentimentality of the strong?

The tobacconist's shop was still open. He fetched the blue banknote and returned it to his relative.

CHAPTER X

HE felt bright and bursting with vigour on the morning of the field practice. He awoke early. They said it was possible that they might stay in the open for the night. He did not care. Only to go somewhere where there was no District Commandant of Schools, in uniform and a sword at his side, where there were no school questions, where rain fell freely and the wind blew without regard for anybody, where the road was equally hard and muddy for all. He hoped this would be the last one. Nothing could possibly come after it. Nothing but the battlefield. He would be a part of the general fate of all and—somehow he imagined that the forces had come to be balanced at last. Equal weights were pulling down both scales. Had he been philosophically inclined that morning, he might have pondered as to how tiny an impulse was necessary to swing the balance out of its equilibrium. The balance of war. Mathematically, a dot, a particle, a speck, is enough to destroy the equipoise of weights in opposite scales. An infinitesimal speck. Perhaps it was he who had been missing so far. Idiotic. What did he think—would *he* decide the World War? No—No—he would not—But—mathematically, it was correct—

He was dressed by the time the others were only about to

get up. He had a full hour left to himself. He decided to answer his wife's latest letter.

Trembling anxiety radiated from her letter. My dearest, my only one, my universe. What shall I write? I am sad. Our only son begins to realize that you do not belong to us now—

He was writing his answer. The whole affair is quite different from the civilians' conception of it—It's difficult to describe how jolly it is—True, we had to study too much, and were examined too often, but that's over now. You were right—they do take into consideration the fact that one has a family—Thus, for instance, there are certain posts behind the front. They publish a newspaper on the Northern Front, and I have been invited to join the staff. I may accept it—if I can't get anything better. The salary is fair, but I'll have to read proofs—I'd rather go to the newspaper, though, than to the quartermaster's department, although that is more comfortable. But it is nearer to the front. I wish, though, that you'd not mention this to anybody as yet. Do you think the newspaper is a better proposition?

What should he write? What *could* he write? If something happened they would telegraph anyway. If something happened—The telegram carrier was still the same little old woman. She would arrive all wet, most probably soaked to the bone. She would say the forest was flooded, she could hardly get through—She would get a glass of brandy—His father would open the telegram but, first, he would put on his spectacles—He would say: Well—what's the matter with the marmalade now—Then he would open the telegram.

Tears would overrun his eyes.

What's this? Have I gone mad? Drill. Field practice. I have to post the letter. How can I dream now—the front is so far away—How could I forget myself? No, the letter is no good. I can't—Why not? Let it go.

He marched smartly, chest out, stomach flat, head high, and when the company began to sing, he, too, joined them:

Égnek a gyertyák az oltárokon,
Mégsem jön ide a párom—

Of all the songs, he liked this one most. It always moved him a little. "The candles on the altar are all lighted. But my

darling will not come—" Why not? How far away now were Heine, and "Faust," and Tasso, Csokonai, Arany, Lermontov. He laughed, silently and to himself: here he was, a university graduate, the proud owner of a diploma, who, after long literary debates in Budapest *cafés*, after long discussions, after Longfellow, was now singing, with a haversack on his back, lines which touched him and delighted him and brought tears to his eyes; "But my darling will not come—" It wasn't bad at all.

They marched miles, climbed hills, crossed forests. He was not tired. He sang and played with his thoughts. Joy and freedom played soft music in his soul. Yes, man dies when he must—but, until then, he may sing, read Zola, kiss children, grip his rifle, set his cap at a rakish angle, hoist his pack into its place with a shrug of the shoulders.

Good old flatfoot, how are you? What do you say to all this? The doctor was right—

This practice did not count, it was not an exam, one did not need to get excited; it was almost war, and tender scents came from the woods—

Halt. A few movements, then a sergeant-major loudly instructed them:

"Under cover of night, the enemy took our capital by storm. They are now mercilessly looting. We shall approach the city from the north-east, surprise the enemy and crush them—"

At last.

For a brief second he expected the newspaper stories he had read to come true: he thought that they would swoop down upon the pillaging enemy with a triumphant yell—

But no.

What kind of aspirant am I, anyway?

Commands were given. Some were moved to the right, some to the left. Some were sent forward, some were left behind. His section was to start in five minutes. They looked at maps, synchronised watches. He did not understand a word of it all. He had not the slightest idea of what was going on.

With five others, he was sent in a northerly direction.

They were supposed to reconnoitre the enemy lying behind a hill.

The other half of the school was the enemy. They had started out early in the morning and were now somewhere beyond the hills. The enemy had white bands on their arms.

They marched towards the hill, but after they were out of sight they took it easy: just walked and talked. They reached the hill. He was the commander. They rested beneath a tree. There were a few so-called good soldiers among them, men who always knew better. These told him that his commands had not been correct. It was possible. But he did not care. He would be more careful at the front. Fall out. For three minutes.

The argument ceased. They talked about something else.

Suddenly a few shots were fired close by and some one yelled at them:

"Surrender!"

Hm. The enemy had surrounded them. That was uncomfortable. He did not care for the shots, he knew they were only blank cartridges. He too had some of them in his belt.

"We won't surrender! We'll defend ourselves! Forward!"

He clenched his rifle and looked around.

His classmate, Arnótfalvi, looked square in his eyes.

"You must surrender, please. That's the Regulation—"

Regulation? He did not know that. It was possible.

"What Regulation?"

"The Regulation that the one who charges first wins and the other surrenders. And there are more of us, anyway."

"Is that also a Regulation?"

"Yes, it is."

Then there was nothing for it. He wouldn't do anything of the sort at the front, but here Regulations were all-important. Arnótfalvi knew them better, he was quite sure of that. Arnótfalvi was first in school, who should know it if not he?

"Well, in that case, we surrender."

The enemy soldiers left the bushes in which they had been hiding and, grinning, surrounded them.

He was very angry. What would happen to them now?

Would they take his rank away from him? What if he had to go to school again?

"Well, we surrender."

"We'll take you to Headquarters. To the General Staff."

Extremely uncomfortable. He could not even imagine what consequences the incident would have. It was terrible. But how was it that he had not heard of this before? Oh, but he had—of course—he had—

"Listen, Arnótfalvi—we are prisoners now, aren't we?"

"Yes, you are."

"Prisoners of war, aren't we?"

"Yes, prisoners of war."

"Well, then—take them—Boys, you give yours up too."

Regulations clearly prescribed that rifle and equipment should be taken away from the prisoners.

The enemy closed round him and his men and led them to Headquarters, to the General Staff. It was a beautiful warm Autumn day and the enemy soldiers were tired. Every one of them carried two rifles and two packs instead of only one. They marched.

"I beg to report, sir, the capture of an enemy patrol—"

He cast down his eyes. He was in despair. Rather death! The shame of it! He was awakened by the loud, healthy merry laughter of his captain.

"Bravo, my boy, bravo! That was smart of you! Devilish smart! So you let yourself be captured, eh? In order that some one else should carry your rifle? and your pack? Bravo! Bravo! Excellent! You're a smart soldier—"

He looked around.

The captain was praising him! Assuring him that he was a smart soldier!

The entire staff laughed with the captain and looked at him warmly, approvingly. They stepped up to him and shook hands with him. No one cared for Arnótfalvi.

They said an idea like that could save a town.

He was a hero. He was the hero of the day.

CHAPTER XI

HE was posted to the seventeenth reinforcement company. That meant that he was going to the front. Scores of his comrades were also posted to various reinforcement units. The accusers, the malicious ones, the gossips were right again. The fellow who staged the concerts and the theatricals was left not. The surgeon's right-hand man, the fellow who helped in the dispensary, was left out. An aspirant who had a pleasant voice was left out. An aspirant who had been employed in the quartermaster's stores was left out. A lieutenant who had not been posted to reinforcement troops for a year and a half was left out again.

Some of them reported ill. Others wired to Budapest. Still others hunted for letters of introduction. Several expected special instructions from the War Office. All around him excitement, despair, search for last straws. Some tried to be sent on new courses. The ranks were also excited. They, too, tried new diseases. They, too, heard of diseases which would keep them at home. They, too, looked for influence to secure jobs in offices. All frantically sought new positions, new duties and new commissions at the last minute.

Those who were left out flattered those in the reinforcements. Come to me, comrade, I'll get a pair of new trousers for you. I'll swap boots with you, of course I will. You may keep the old ones, too, of course you may keep them.

Of the others, only the more experienced ones were busy. Non-commissioned officers, that sort of men. Sentenced to go, most of them apathetically waited for the day to entrain. The food became better. It was so good that he too ate with the privates. The porridge was cooked with lard and there were large chunks of meat in the soup. Large, soft, fat pieces, or lean ones, according to one's taste.

He was glad that he could leave all these clerks behind. No, he wouldn't say a word. If everybody shirked, if everybody stood aside, if everybody conspired, it would never end. One with nerves simply couldn't stand it. Yes,—living in

peace, with one's family, one may be a clerk. But now! The nervous wreck, the man with asthma, the man with gallstones, the man with lumbago, the man with ailing eyes, let them die if they don't know anybody who could help them. The healthy one with influence buried his head deep in his papers and didn't look up when the unfortunate asthmatic was taken to the train. He would not look up from his papers until the end of the war.

Many were taken out of the reinforcements in the last hour. Telegrams arrived from various Ministries. One was indispensable in a bank, another one was detailed to an agricultural school. One was found to be suffering from an incurable disease.

And there were the clerks. Their number steadily increased. There were so many of them that, in a short time, they would be killing each other. They would start intrigues against each other, they would plot and scheme, they would denounce each other. These, in the offices, prepared for a war more cruel and more merciless than the one that faced those in the reinforcements.

He had an unpleasant affair on the parade ground. He was section leader and Rozenstein was in his section. This Rozenstein was a near-sighted, gaunt, awkward watchmaker's assistant. Jeges was platoon commander. Direction: the pear tree. They ran towards it in extended order. They lay down, rose, ran again. They lay down again, and ran forward again. Two or three of them at a time. Rozenstein ran by his side. He breathed heavily and stumbled at every other step. They were already far beyond the drill ground, they were already running across the fields. The near-sighted Rozenstein constantly stumbled, the furrows bothered him.

Jeges bawled at him. He said that Rozenstein behaved as a Jew would. He yelled that Rozenstein would be a coward at the front, too. He would always lag in the rear.

"Listen, Jeges," he said, "don't bawl at Rozenstein. I can see how hard he tries. He can hardly breathe, he's so tired. I can tell he's doing all he can."

"Shut up," yelled Jeges at him.

He got up at once and went back. Straight to the lieutenant.

"Lieutenant, I beg to report, I can't stand Aspirant Jeges yelling at a man just because he happens to be a Jew. Rozenstein is a sick man and near-sighted into the bargain, and I can see that he's doing his level best. Jeges told me to shut up—"

He was boiling over, he was enraged, he was quivering with rage. The lieutenant coldly answered:

"What do you mean by leaving the line without permission? Go back to your place at once. My commands were: in battle order, and your leaving the line amounts to running away. As if we were before the enemy and you'd left your post—"

Depressed and dumb, he returned to his place and lay down. They went on with the exercise and he worked humilitated, embittered.

After the parade, the lieutenant called both him and Jeges aside.

"Where have you read, Aspirant Jeges, that Army Regulations discriminate against Jews? Army Regulations clearly forbid all types of discrimination. How dare you set yourself against Army Regulations?"

He spoke to Jeges at length, but he mentioned neither humanitarianism, nor equality, nor humanism. Only Army Regulations. The lieutenant said that Jeges's offence was just as much against Army Regulations as his leaving the line. He said that both were grave offences. And unless they promised him, there, on the spot, upon their word of honour, never again to set themselves against Army Regulations, he would report the matter to the captain at once. And then they would suffer the consequences—

He was deeply impressed by the lieutenant's speech. He liked the idea that Army Regulations forbade religious prejudices, that both were grave offences.

They both promised the lieutenant to be careful in the future. He would never again leave the line, and Jeges would never again mention the Jews. They would never again forget Army Regulations. Furthermore, continued the lieutenant, future officers should bear no grudges against each other. He asked them to shake hands. They looked squarely

into each other's eyes and shook hands. "But," said Jeges, "look out, if you get out of the reinforcements, if you try to be a slacker, the shake doesn't count." He smiled, and replied, right in front of the lieutenant, in quite a friendly voice, "Look out yourself, my boy, you're a dirty coward. You dare bawl at the men only at home. If you get out of the reinforcements, if you don't come with us, you're a bastard."

Jeges then embraced him and said, "All right, don't you worry, I'll never do such a thing again; it was going a bit far; forgive me."

The company fell in and they went home, singing. Jeges and he talked until they reached the city limits. They opened their hearts. They discovered that they both loathed the slackers, and neither of them could comprehend the conduct of the war. Neither could understand the little tricks of the machine, of the organization, they could not comprehend what sort of war this was: registrations, figures, inspections, calculations, supervisions, men in offices and bureaux covering reams of white paper with black ink and drawing men away from the fighting line. There were thousands and thousands o posts filled by men with influence, posts for which veritable death-struggles were being waged—to secure this, to secure that—

The lieutenant rode back to them. He said that a runner had come for him, General Szvörcsök was in town, he was commanded to go to the barracks, right away. He asked which of them was the senior aspirant? They found that it was he. He had received his appointment a day before Jeges. The lieutenant transferred the command of the company to him, and warned him to be careful, for it was possible that they would meet the general on their way. He cautioned him to be particularly careful about the salute. It would be best to send an N.C.O. ahead to find out when the general came in sight. He had better be prepared against surprises. Then he rode away.

He took over the company. The honour gave him a feeling of satisfaction.

Jeges tried to give him instructions.

He looked at Jeges and addressed him in a cold, official voice:

"Aspirant Jeges will take command of Number Two Platoon—"

Jeges saluted and took his place at the head of the platoon. He ordered them to stop singing, sent a corporal ahead and told him to report the general's approach at once. The company marched smartly, he walked proudly, and the pavement of the high-street echoed the rhythmic beat of their feet.

The corporal hurried back to him. Excitedly he reported that the general was at the next corner.

And indeed, the red of the general's coat was already visible. He raised his sword high in the air and cautioned his men to hold themselves in readiness.

When they reached the general, he gave the command:

"Company, attention! Eyes right!"

He fixed his eyes on the general and executed the salute with his sword, precisely as he had seen the officers do it.

The general's face suddenly grew dark. He shook his head disapprovingly.

"Halt, come here."

He halted the company and walked up to the general.

"No good, no good! Why did you leave your company without a commander? Who is in command while you are away from it?

He went back to the company and handed over the command to Jeges.

"Well, my son," said the general, "now let's see, how did you execute your salute? Give me your sword—"

"I cannot part with my sword, sir—"

"Don't be a fool. Give me your sword. Very well. Now then, you saluted me like this, didn't you?"

The general demonstrated how he had saluted.

"Well, my son, you are not entitled to that salute as yet. You are only an aspirant. You may salute like that when you get your commission. For the time being, however, you don't bring the blade in front of your face. You just lean it smartly against your shoulder. Like this. It's a very nice salute. Not as beautiful as the other one, but you are not entitled to that yet. You are not an officer."

The general smiled as he returned his sword. The officers with the general, seeing that their superior smiled, timidly imitated him.

"It'll be different at the front, it'll be different at the front," boiled within him.

CHAPTER XII

THE old man sent his wife and son to him for a few days. As if they had guessed that he would not be there for long.

"It was very wise of you to come. I should have gone home myself. But now I have a chance for an excellent post behind the line, and I was afraid that if I went home I might miss it. It was a marvellous idea to come to me here."

But his assumed light-heartedness had no effect. There was a heavy burden upon his soul and his wife asked no details about the job behind the lines.

His wife remained sad, listened to him silently, her eyes were constantly covered with a thin film of tears.

Lively and natural and good-humoured and careless—he tried to be all that. He wanted his wife to see him thus. But he did not succeed. His jokes fell flat and she could easily see that all his words were lies. He spoke clumsily, awkwardly. Anybody could see that he was merely acting. But he acted badly. There was no life in his acting. It was as if he had been prompted all the time. Like a man who did not know his part. Realizing this, he stopped acting. Their boy was playing on the carpeted floor, they sat on the couch and all of a sudden their eyes were covered with tears and both cried. He kissed his wife's hand and said nothing. He said not one more word of the job behind the line, of the newspaper of which he would be managing editor. Of the quartermaster's store which would be in a secure shell-proof dugout miles behind the firing line.

He was going to the front, with a revolver and a haversack, a map and a field dressing, and a little tin box containing a card with his name and the name of the person to be notified in an emergency.

He was going to the front, to battle, and he would have a

bayonet at the end of his rifle and he would meet another man, also with a bayonet at the end of his rifle, and they would thrust at each other with their bayonets—or, they might shoot at each other. That other man might take aim at him. That other man had also been jobless before the war, his son was also with his parents, somewhere in the Caucasus —It was possible that he would cut the throat of a baker, it was possible that he would shoot out the eyes of a choir-leader, it was possible that he would run his bayonet through the heart of a professor—They cried and kissed each other, and stared at each other with infinite tenderness and infinite sorrow and with love for which they had to suffer.

He took the boy in his lap and did not say a word to him. He merely embraced him and rocked him, and they rocked their son together, and their heads met above the boy's head.

"You will go home to-morrow—" he said with a mortal pain at his heart.

The woman and the boy went home the next day, and they never said another word about what would be and how it would be. The train took her away, and took away his son, and when the huge engine started, it seemed to him that it rolled over his heart and flattened it out. His wife soon disappeared from the window, but the boy went on waving his hand for a long time.

The day to entrain arrived.

Noise and leave-taking and flowers and band. The train was decorated with flowers, and all the slackers at the depôt came to see them off, and it was impossible not to notice a trace of malice in their eyes, As if they had said: After all, we are the knowing birds. But otherwise they acted as if they considered the draft all heroes and gladly promised to do everything for them. Even things nobody asked for.

Of course, comrade, if you need anything, just write. Why, certainly, we'll send your letters after you, of course, though I hear I myself shall have to go in a couple of weeks—All claimed their jobs were only temporary, all expected to go in a few weeks. They complained that service in the offices was frightful, they'd a hundred times rather be in the trenches, a hundred times rather be at the front. That regimental

surgeon is so capricious. It is more difficult to stand him than it is a battle. Those concerts and theatricals eat up a man's nerves. Anybody who says that staging a concert isn't hard work is mistaken. Who says that those things aren't necessary? The soldiers need entertainment just as badly as they need bread. Even more so. Entertainments keep up their spirit. They forget their sorrows, they forget home. Entertainments make them soldiers. The concerts are more valuable than the drills. And then the clerks. They too were full of complaints. You are happy. You've escaped the torments. I am just a rag, everybody wipes his dirty boots on me. One simply can't bear this any longer. We are responsible for everything. Why? And if they don't need us, why don't they send us to the front? We'd go gladly, but we'd like to know who could take our places. It's harder work than to be on guard duty. One must be more watchful than before the enemy. At the front, one faces the enemy only in charges—here, all the time.

All the slackers complained.

But they were there, all around them, all busy, active, all issuing orders, all giving advice. They all watched each other suspiciously and all laboured to appear indispensable. They distributed rations of *zwieback*. They discovered, at the last minute, that the draft was twenty-two tins of meat short. One of them reported to the officer in command that he had packed eight pairs of breeches separately, they were of special cloth, officers' breeches. He had reserved the last eight pairs for the captain.

To leave all these men behind, to leave them here! He felt more relieved than on the day when being called up had cut short his worries about a job. To escape them was a greater relief than to escape school. This was more, this was better than anything. There was nothing that could conceivably counterbalance this feeling. Yes, there was. One was to pay for it with blood. And:—no one asked them anything. No one asked them whether they wanted to go. Just as the old teacher had once predicted, in the *café*. They cared nothing for enthusiasm. For phrases. You were just simply in it. "They need the multitude, they need the masses." There

was no agitation. No speeches in front of the *Café Baross*. No crying women in tram-cars. There were only commands. How right the old teacher had been! Although—it was better to be anywhere else than here. No, not here, only not here, only away from here. Out there, on the bank of a river, beneath the free and infinite sky, there would be no questions, no examinations, no official letters, despite the fact that he had got a good mark for them. There would be no slackers out there, no influence, no flattery: Captain, I beg to report, I put in the last eight pairs of breeches for you. Captain, there are twenty-two extra tins of meat here.

Jeges was also there. He was a young boy, this Aspirant Jeges, and he was now talking to three young girls. The girls were deeply moved. When Jeges noticed him, he took him by the arm and introduced him to the girls.

"We pledged ourselves," he said, "to go together—"

The little girls stared at them with sincere sorrow in their eyes. There were flowers in their hands and they decorated the hilts of their swords. He talked to them as if they had been his little sisters, and they sobbed as bitterly as if he had been their big brother. They said that Jeges' name was written in their Bible, they would write his name also, and they would pray for him, too, every day.

The conversation had a cheerful and comforting effect on him, as if they had come from a foreign world. They had far more to do with the World War than the twenty-two tins of meat. The concert-director seemed to be a mere low actor, a cheap comedian, a clown at a small local fair, in the presence of these three little girls.

A bugle-call was heard. Time to entrain.

"My wife is waiting for me, my son is waiting for me, my mother, my father, my brothers are waiting for me," he smiled.

The bugle-call was heard again. It urged them to go.

One of the little girls looked at him:

"Let me say good-bye to you for your little son—"

"And I—for your wife—"

"And I—for your mother—"

With their tender, thin little arms, they embraced him

and took leave of him, crying, with sweet pain in their hearts: three compassionate little souls, three pure little hearts, three heroic and sincere little soldiers.

The train rolled out, and he stood by the window of his compartment and looked back at the pure and innocent little island of three little girls. At the girls who waved their hands to him, who had thrown white flowers on the road that led to the front. A pure little island, and around them the filthy waves of the whirlpool of malicious slackers, lead-swingers, malingerers, clerks. They added up figures and measured and bargained with the food, and perhaps they even profiteered.

He took Jeges by the arm, and so they stood, side by side, their souls free and purified, a weight lifted from them, gazing back at the terminus that slowly disappeared in the distance—

From the wagons carrying the men a song came to his ears, his favourite song:

Égnek a gyertyák az oltároкon,
Mégsem jön ide a párom—

CHAPTER XIII

HE had sent a wire to his sister asking her to be at the station at such and such a time. When they reached Homonna, he looked out. Yes, there was his sister, and his brother-in-law, the whole family. They brought him salami and roast duck, pastries, cakes, a bottle of cognac, cigarettes. They caressed him, made much of him. The children sat in his lap. The whole family was enthusiastic. When did you get a letter from mother, they asked; why didn't you write, do write from the front, they said.

He did not like their attitude. It was all very well; it was as it should have been, no doubt. One went when one had to go, even though no one asked him whether he went gladly or not. But this enthusiasm cooled him.

He wanted to line up the children and their mother and daddy and ask them: "Well, children, tell me, what would

you say if daddy were going now instead of me? Eh? How dared you think of the roast duck and the cigarettes? How dared you think, dear sister, of the salami? How did you come to think, dear brother-in-law, of the cognac? What's all this? Shall I take leave of the roast duck? Shall I take leave of the salami? What's all this racket? What's all this enthusiasm? Why, there is no revenge any more. Do you think, my dears, that we fight to revenge the assassination of the Archduke? My dears—have you never heard of the cheap waterways the Russian landowners want? What do you think of the Asiatic markets of the German industrial magnates? And the cognac!"

Well—he just could not shake off a picture that lived vividly in his memory.

He had been quite a small boy then. A gang of bandits who had been robbing and murdering in the Forest of Avas, had finally been captured by the gendarmes. It must have been twenty years ago. The gendarmes had led the bandits through their farm. László Dobgye and his comrades had been chained to each other, and as they had marched with downcast eyes between the lines of gendarmes, their chains had rattled at their every step.

Then his father had stopped the procession and given a bottle of brandy to the bandits. The gendarmes had let them drink it. For the last time, before they were hanged, they had received a little favour from life. Let them drink, people in the village had said, they are done for anyway and they are harmless now. They won't murder anybody any more. Their chains had rattled, and the group of men sentenced to death marched off, and the townspeople had said his father had been right when he had given them a drink. They had all run home, all had picked up something, all had given something to the bandits. They had run along the road after them, they had loaded them with gifts.

He was going to the front, and they made him take leave of food and drinks and—

The bugle called and he boarded the train. They waved their handkerchiefs, he waved his, then, all of a sudden, he turned to Jeges:

"Look, Jeges, your eyes are better than mine. Has any one fainted?"

"No," said Jeges, "no one."

"Then please do me a favour. Wave my handkerchief for me for a while: I think the lieutenant has called me."

Jeges remained at the window, good-natured Jeges, and waved his handkerchief until the next stop. Then he returned to him in his compartment, where he was calmly reading the afternoon paper.

Here and there, they noticed an occasional soldier's grave. At first they looked at them deeply moved, later they got accustomed to them.

The train stopped. It was said they had reached the frontier. Some of the men got out. They picked grass, flowers. Some of them wrapped a bit of earth in their handkerchiefs. They were all moved. He and Jeges were sad, but they were not touched at all, and for that they felt secretly ashamed of themselves. They would have liked a nameless pain to cut into their hearts the moment the boundary line disappeared, but they were overwhelmed by quite a different feeling.

"I wish we had a professor of history with us," Jeges remarked in a low tone.

"What do you want a professor of history for?"

"I should like to know—I should like to be assured by some one—that it is a historical necessity for me to kick the bucket—"

"Hullo, old man, are you going sick with a weak heart?"

"Come, come, this is no time to joke—It isn't that—I know that, for centuries, it was the privilege of the nobility to defend the country—I know that it was the aristocracy who shed their blood once upon a time—And it seems to me that it's the Jeges family's turn now—The trouble is I don't know history—It seems we've always been slackers—and now we've got to pay for it—God knows—"

"Well, old man, I don't know—But weren't there any mercenaries among your ancestors? And then—wait a minute—something's occurred to me—why, if you were slaves, you must have been defeated in war—It's quite certain that the Jeges family also fought."

"It's possible—But then we were always the losers—Perhaps now—"

"You'll lay the foundations of the Jeges dynasty."

"No, I won't found any Jeges dynasty, I fight for my own skin, and for myself. I am not a mercenary now, if I win I win for myself—"

Jeges shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know what all this means, I merely guess. But it can't be for nothing."

"You will get a piece of the conquered territory—say of the Ukraine—"

Jeges replied with conviction:

"Yes, that's quite possible."

So there were such people! This fellow Jeges had gone crazy. He must have read about the Order of Maria Theresa and decorations and heroic feats of arms, and now he thought that he would get a share of the land he would help to conquer. Although—who knows? It wouldn't be such a foolish thing after all. To purchase, at the price of risking one's life for a few months, the peace, the carelessness and the joy of a lifetime! But how about the men farther down the train? the fellows in the goods vans? the privates? Will they get something too? And will they get less than the officers? And what's going to happen to the Russian soldiers? and the French *poilus?* Will they become slaves? Will that be necessary? Jeges, will you want that? Would you take them away from their villages, their children, their accordions, their churches with their garlic-shaped roofs, their harvests? Yes? No—no—why, of course not—

The train stopped. At last. After three days' journey, they got off the train in the middle of a meadow.

They had a day's rest; then: to the front.

A gently sloping hill rose on the horizon. They pointed in that direction: there was the front. All of a sudden, he lost sight of Jeges. They were both posted to new companies, they were in command of new men now. New commanders came, he did not even notice when Jeges left him, he did not know where he had gone, he just did not see him any more.

He had no time to get acquainted with the new company.

He was given the command of a platoon, and they told him they would start in the afternoon. Precisely to the moment, at the scheduled time, he was at the head of his platoon. They started.

He was lost here. He could not make one step without orders. He did not know where the paths in the swamps led to, he did not know to whom to turn, he did not know what was going on a hundred feet from him. His only contact was with those of whom he was in command. And with his immediate superiors. Of them, he knew only one or two. In a foreign land, beneath a foreign sky, in an alien climate, among strangers, amidst unfamiliar circumstances, he felt like a foreign body. A foreign body that was thrown hither and thither. He had completely lost his independence. There were no connections here. No influence. No slackers. One did not know here, how to go about things.

It was well thus. Thus it had to be. At last: complete liberation. Mental calmness. Serenity. He would go wherever they sent him. And wherever he went he would do his duty. It was the business of his superiors to think for him now. He was to look out and take care of his men only. One could not well expect that they would be enthusiastic, let alone that everybody should be equally enthusiastic. But, at least, they were honest here. Decent. They were brothers. Of course, he would go with them—with these—these timid, good-natured—yes, good-natured—very good-natured—yes—he would go with them—He liked them—They were all, all of them, his brothers—and they all, all together, they all took their blood to—If necessary—How good it was to be with them, how very much better than with the concert-director and the son of the forester! How much better—among these irresolute weak, lost men—men who had not picked a winning lottery ticket—but men whose conscience was clear—

They were approaching the hill, and the men became nervous. They picked faults with each other and were easily irritated. Some of them marched without a word. Others hurled vulgar insults at each other, in short, torn disconnected sentences. From one section came the sound of a loud slap.

He halted the platoon.

"Look here, boys—I won't say: stand easy—I won't give commands—I won't say that I'll run the beggar in—I won't even address you as boys, because there are fathers among you—But let's talk as brothers—Do you know that you have no relatives on earth now? I won't say encouraging words to you, I won't shout: forward—But, do you know that you have nobody in the world now?—Your wife's washing dishes now—your son, playing a flute—your father, smoking his pipe—gentlemen are preparing to go to the theatre—there are some working in the fields—some adding up figures—some driving cars—some preaching—some going to a wedding to-night—who is our brother now? We are exiled now, deserted, shut out—who is our brother now? Who is our father? Who is our child? Who our wife? Where are they all? Only we exist—and we are alone—It will be our eyes that will run out and drip down our temples—it will be our knees which will be caught by the barbed wire entanglements—Why fight each other now? Aren't there enough against us? Do we need to fight against each other? Platoon, attention!"

Silent, moved, sadly and in perfect order, the men marched behind him—

CHAPTER XIV

THEY were approaching the hill, and he felt a sort of unpleasant respect, a sort of uncomfortable regard for the front which, behold, had been steadily coming nearer to him. It spread from the Black Sea to the Baltic, and now it resembled a calmly sleeping viper. Yet, it was the field of honour, the gigantic, merciless, sincere and cruel arena of true manliness. Thus it had to be approached: free of all earthly mud, penitent and purified, with naked heart, open, ready to be sacrificed—

And this swamp across which led a road roughly paved with boards. This is the Swamp of Rokitno already, in the Volhynian marshland—Beautiful, romantic names—The

Masurian lakes in the North—Drive them into them, drive the dogs into them, cried somebody in an editorial—Hindenburg drowned the Russians in them—Who will be the hero of the Swamp of Rokitno?

The swollen carcass of a horse was lying in the swamp; above it, crows croaked—

It was one of our own horses. It might have been one of our own men just as well. Drowning of soldiers should be forbidden. Somebody might write of our men: Drive them into it, drive them into the Swamp of Rokitno, into the marshes of Volhynia—

An order was submitted to him at the foot of the hill. A sergeant would guide him, and his platoon, to his appointed position.

The sergeant saluted, came close to him and then clapped his hands in surprise.

"How did you ever get here?—Don't you remember me, doctor? My name is Kun—"

He remembered Kun. Clerk of the District Court in his native town, of course he remembered him. But he was his superior now, and he was in no mood to make friends. Nor was he inclined to rejoice. Reunion—What did it mean here?

Mr. Kun looked around, as if to ascertain that no one was watching him from the front, then bent nearer to him and whispered confidentially in his ear:

"I'll do everything in my power to help you, doctor—"

"Aspirant!"

Kun was put out for a minute:

"—to help you, sir—"

He looked around. In the distance, aeroplanes were silhouetted against the sky. Small clouds of smoke—shells—dissolved in the air, one of our own horses rotted in the swamp; from afar, the rattle of machine guns was heard, penetrating the fragrance of the fields—Behind him, soldiers stood in bluish-grey uniforms, ahead of them, the infinite and terrifying mystery of the Front, near by, a tanned field-worker in shirt-sleeves leaned against an abandoned gun—and now, Mr. Kun—

"Thank you, sergeant—But how can you believe what

you're saying? How are you going to help me? Will you ask General Linsingen to put me on the left flank? And will you ask the Russians not to shoot in my direction? No, I don't need you. Thank you—"

Mr. Kun smiled superciliously, insultingly, unpleasantly, confidentially.

"I am with the staff and—"

"That's enough, sergeant—That's enough—"

He looked at his men. There they were, there they came silently, worn, lost in thought, stumbling, uncertain, silenced.

"Light your pipes—Light your pipes if you want to—"

Mr. Kun maliciously interrupted him:

"You'd better not light your pipes, because the lieutenant is waiting for us and he can see us from his dugout—"

"Don't light your pipes," he said disgustedly and wearily, "we'll soon be there—"

The lieutenant wore a white cap, a white hussar's cap of lambskin. He had not got accustomed to these exotic accoutrements as yet. They were against Regulations. And, incidentally, they served as excellent targets. How could any one wear them?

His entrance into the trench was a failure.

"No good! Do it again!" shouted the lieutenant when he was about to make his report.

He went back with his whole platoon, about thirty paces and made his entry again.

The lieutenant was angry. He was furious.

"What's this? What kind of a crew is this anyway? What kind of an aspirant are you? Back again!"

They succeeded at the fourth attempt. The lieutenant, mellowed, listened to his report. Then he said that the first three entries had been abominable. The last one had been fine. Very fine. He was very satisfied. He invited him to supper.

During supper, the lieutenant asked him:

"Tell me, are you a good soldier?"

He could not control his emotions any longer:

"Lieutenant—do you mind if I am very frank? Will you permit me, lieutenant, to speak unofficially, as it were, just

confidentially? Well, I am thirty-two years old, married, the father of a son, a university graduate. I have a degree and you, lieutenant, you also have some position as a civilian, a profession—"

"Go ahead, aspirant—I hope—"

"No, I don't want to hurt anybody. You ask me, lieutenant, am I a good soldier or am I not? What do I know? I don't know. Please forgive me, but we aren't on duty now, we are eating our supper now and at the front—I couldn't get out of the reinforcements, to be frank, I didn't even want to, I almost failed in my exams and if it hadn't been for my official letters I should have. Mr. Kun wanted to help me, he said he was with the staff, I refused him, the entry failed three times—I don't know what sort of soldier I am, I am not a soldier, I am no soldier at all, I am a married man, I am the father of a child, I am a university graduate, but I am not a soldier—You may send me anywhere, lieutenant, I will go, I shall faithfully obey every order you give me—I shall be afraid before the enemy, but that's my business and I won't show it. If it's necessary I'll creep forward among barbed-wire entanglements; if it's necessary, I'll charge; if you send me, I'll attack, but I am not a soldier, lieutenant, I am not a soldier, forgive me, I don't even know who is a soldier now, who is a good soldier—"

The lieutenant pondered.

"As a matter of fact, that's what counts. To do your duty. I am a certified accountant at home, and French and English correspondent—Welcome, comrade—"

The lieutenant's dugout was large, comfortable, pleasant. They talked, they became intimate. After supper, the lieutenant lent him his orderly to guide him to his dugout. His own orderly was an elderly man, he walked after them dejected, weary, tired. Suddenly he stopped the two men.

"Wait a moment."

He straightened himself out, and nervously, with beating heart, raised himself to the parapet. Carefully he looked out. He stared and stared, but could not see anything, although it was not very dark. The lieutenant's orderly asked him:

"What do you want to see, sir?"

"Sh-h— Don't talk so loudly—I am trying to see the enemy lines."

The orderly laughed:

"You can't see them, sir."

"Of course you can."

"No, you can't, sir. There's no front in that direction. We are in reserve now. The front is over there, beyond the hill. That's where the front line is. This is only the reserve position. The front is at least a mile from here, you can't see the Russians from here. We are resting now."

"Then what are all these trenches for?"

"Well, we may need them some day—"

So that's it. So that's the reason for the four entries. For the entries according to Regulations. This wasn't the front yet!

His dugout was a wretched place. A small hole, dug into damp earth. On one side, against the wall, a wide bench of earth. That was his bed. His orderly spread some straw on it and his bed was made. He could lie down. He put his coat beneath him, the haversack under his head, and rolled himself up in his blanket. He did not undress. He turned on his left side and tried to sleep. Accidentally, he touched the cool and damp earth. Sleep left him instantaneously—There were people directing concerts now—There were some growing angry because their bid was doubled—There were some profiteering in stocks—There were some who were irritated because their coffee was served too hot—Unheard of, it takes hours to cool—There were some going to keep appointments—There were some reading war bulletins—There were some saying, Thank God, the 256 is taken—The lieutenant was satisfied, the entry had been quite correct on the fourth try—There were some who had been given the sack to-day, they were unhappy now—There were shopkeepers who had asked their wives this morning to cook paprika fish for supper and the women, beaming, were just bringing in the steaming paprika fish from the kitchen—There were some who, at this very moment, reached to their hearts and cried, fatally wounded: Mother—There were some whose legs were being amputated just then—There was one lying in a damp hole,

his hand withdrawn in horror from the cold wall of the ditch with a worm crawling towards his face—

"Are you asleep, Peter?"

"No, sir, not asleep—"

"Couldn't you build a fire somehow?"

"No, sir, I couldn't."

He fell into a light slumber. All of a sudden, gunfire awakened him. Artillery. Machine guns. A runner came: Stand to. He was ready in a second. At the head of his platoon. They went up to the front line. They were led through communication trenches. All carried full equipment. With plenty of ammunition—The front line—There was no difference between it and the one he had entered last evening. Yes, this one was slightly wider. And higher. The parapets were armoured.

He was full of activity, energy and excitement. But he also felt a sort of anxious timidity. They did not leave the trenches, they did no fighting in no man's land. He had expected they would. But it seemed to him now that they could not get out of the trench, even if they wanted to. Not forward, anyway. A flare shot up here and there once in a while and he saw the barbed-wire entanglement in front of them. The carefully built barbed-wire entanglement. One could not cross that dense barrier at all. Their orders were to keep up a steady fire at the enemy. They did not see the enemy. They were firing all night long. Firing at an invisible enemy. He could not stick his head out. He might be shot. He was intrigued by the shrapnel: they were like fireworks. He liked the way they exploded into beautiful clusters of glowing sparks. And the sounds of rifles, machine-guns, guns and mines were harmoniously blended as if they were conducted by a musician.

Dawn came, and the firing ceased. Dawn came, and then cautiously he looked at the enemy. The enemy was dug in within a stone's throw. A sergeant who had been here for some time told him that the Russians had advanced a little last night. That was why they made all the noise.

Dawn came, and there was a wheat-field before his eyes. Barbed wire was wreathed round stakes among the tender

crop. Enchanting fragrances, the smell of Spring, came from the wheat-field, and a lovely little breeze blew in no man's land. Sparrows jumped hither and thither among the stakes. They alighted on the barbed wire. The sparrows chirped quite nonchalantly on the battlefield. They hopped about carelessly above the mines. They alighted on the machine which—so he was told—spat flames and burned soldiers alive. They alighted on the gas-masks which had been all prepared but had not been used. They perched quietly on the rifles left on the parapets.

CHAPTER XV

IT was Spring—the fields were growing green—A children's song: "Lustily chatters the little brook, its crust of ice has disappeared—"

"Sipos and Rozenstein are wounded. Kamincki is dead—"

Sipos and Rozenstein? And Kamincki? He remembered only Rozenstein. Well, Jeges, old man, he hadn't run away, eh? As a matter of fact, even if he had wanted to he couldn't have done so—but, all the same, he had not. He had never met either Sipos or Kamincki. Sipos had already been taken back. Kamincki was still there. He could have a look at him if he wanted to. This was his last chance to see how Kamincki looked. But how could he have died? He was told the trenches were safe.

He reported Kamincki's death and added that he couldn't understand how it had happened. They had all been protected. They had not been fighting in the open.

He thought he would be held responsible for Kamincki. That he had to explain why Kamincki had died.

Although it didn't matter either way. Kamincki was taken back before he had a chance to make his acquaintance.

They said he had been killed by a shell-splinter. No trench offered protection from those. He realized that, after all, he himself had not been so safe last night. A shell-splinter might have hit him, too. And, in that case, they would have covered him with a coat, too. And the captain would have

said: I don't know this aspirant. And they would have taken him back.

He returned to his men. He had worked all night long without the slightest sensation of fear, as if he had been attending, and quite conscientiously, too, to a rather important matter of business. Now, all of a sudden, he became nervous and disquieted. So that's it? So I was in it, too? Of course, a shell splinter might have hit me too? Or a bullet. Or a mine. Was this all? Not even a battle? Or was it a battle?

He looked out across the field—It was Spring—

The smell of verdant fields roused the sleepy and tired men, the farmers—They gazed at the damp wall of the trench with shining eyes—The wheat fields and the bellies of corpses hanging on barbed wire fences were growing green—Spring—

They stayed in the front-line trenches, the others, relieved, went back to rest. His men were put up in a large dugout, he was given a smaller one for himself. It was much more comfortable than the one he had had last night. Except for the sentries all went to sleep. After last night they deserved a little sleep.

Birds chirped, the sun shone, he stretched himself out on the straw.

Kamincki will never again know how good it is to rest. He will never again pull off his boots—He will never again know how pleasant it is to do that—Although, Kamincki has merely gone to sleep—

Kamincki is merely a few minutes ahead of him—In a few minutes he will not feel anything either—Just like Kamincki—But, he will wake up—And Kamincki won't—But, he will have to struggle through barbed-wire entanglements—Flame-throwers will be brought into action and his hair will catch fire, and his chest will catch fire, and flames will burn his throat and he will be unable to extinguish them—He will cough and the poison gas will suffocate him—He will be caught by the wire and he won't be able to get out—

The brook is lustily chattering and the corpses among the barriers grow green just like the wheat fields—

Kamincki has gone to sleep—Nothing will wake him up—Good for him!—No bullet will pierce his eyes—

Someone woke him up. He looked up at him. The man seemed to be a captain. But he was not sure of it. The officer wore unfamiliar badges on his collar.

The odd-looking captain reassured him. Don't get up, aspirant. Is it true that you are a lawyer? Yes, it is. Why?

Don't be nervous, aspirant. Don't put yourself out. Mr. Kun has recommended you. He gave me your address. I want to talk over something with you. Headquarters gave me permission to come here. They permitted me to talk this matter over with you.

What matter? The concealed ditches full of spikes? The bullets headed for his lungs? The fire that flame-throwers spit at him? the traversing machine-guns seeking for his legs? The shell-splinters trying to crack his skull? What matter?

The captain told him that an action had been brought against him. He was threatened with trial by court-martial. He had been called to account. He was a captain in the quartermaster's department. He explained this because he saw that he did not know his rank. The captain wanted the matter to be drawn out. He was a lawyer, he ought to know how to do it.

Why should the matter be drawn out?

Well, because there were some alleged discrepancies in the accounts. The trial must be delayed until the next attack.

"The next attack? Why, there was an attack last night!"

"Oh, no, that wasn't an attack. Just a little skirmish. What I mean is a real attack. It can't be long before it comes, just a few weeks. And if we could draw out the thing for a few weeks, the discrepancies could be explained and I should be saved—

The captain would be saved in case of a real attack, a serious attack. Because last night's attack wasn't serious. But if a real attack came, a thousand Kaminckis would go and the quartermaster-captain would be saved.

"And what do you want me to do?"

Thr captain smiled.

He wanted to prepare carefully drawn up and complicated documents to be sent to the Quartermaster-General, documents they would answer at great length. Then we should answer them again. Just for a couple of weeks.

He knew that much depended on a captain in the quartermaster's department. He disposed of the milk, he dispensed the wine, he distributed supplies to the officers' messes. He could even recommend men for certain appointments. Good ones and bad ones. He was a rather important man. And if he accepted the job, if he decided to prepare the documents, well, he would see to it that he got a more comfortable job, far behind the front line—He would see to it. He wouldn't regret it. Mr. Kun had recommended him very warmly—

Nice Mr. Kun. So he had done this. So he did know how to help him. He proved it here on the battlefield, before the enemy. He could speak to Linsingen. He could speak to the Russian General Staff—Here's proof of his intervention. He had spoken. He is powerful, is Mr. Kun. But what's going to happen to the others? To what others? To the others who slapped each other in the face while marching toward the front line? who cursed each other at a time when they should have been possessed with the sacredness of the moment? who fought among themselves instead of being inspired by the sublimity of the hour? But, of course, they are unknown. No, Mr. Kun knows them—And now—now Kamincki lies covered with his coat and Sipos's right leg is being amputated —there will be a serious attack; men, maddened by the fear of death, will crawl forward against enemy lines, but he will be sitting far behind the lines, smoking a cigar and pricking it with a toothpick in order to make it draw better—Is it possible?

"All right, captain, I'll do it."

"The battalion needs a supply officer and you are just the man for the job. We need somebody, anyway. Well, let's say that you'll be in charge of the officers' mess. I think that will be about the best. We need a man for that job, too. You can come up here whenever you want to—but why force it?"

A few hours after his first meeting with Death, he plunged headlong into a big bunch of papers, documents and records.

He read carefully and rather interestedly the detailed description of the food-dictator's thefts. The night was quiet. He inspected the sentries, then hurriedly returned to his dugout and started to work on the brief. He worked diligently. He'll show them what's what! The Quartermaster-General will have to do some fast thinking.

His orderly was snoring. He heard some noise outside his dugout, but he continued his work:

"Whereas—"

But the commotion became louder. He rose, went out and saw Sándor Peti lying on a stretcher. He had inspected Sándor Peti, in his sentry-post, half an hour before. Now Sándor Peti was lying on a stretcher and he looked as if he were sleeping. He turned on his torch and asked what had happened?

They turned Sándor Peti's head and now he saw that half of Sándor Peti's face was missing.

On one side he was still Sándor Peti, but on the other side he had no perky little black moustache, no eyebrow, no ear, no temple. On the other side, Sándor Peti had nothing but two bloody rows of teeth and, looking at him from that side no one could see that he was Private Sándor Peti.

CHAPTER XVI

NO one was held responsible for the death of Private Sándor Peti, whose bloody teeth protruded from his torn face which resembled a dentist's advertisement. All he had to do about it was to report it.

"Some day they will report me too," he thought. "The sergeant will make a little circle, or a small cross, next to my name in the list. He will write it in pencil. The lieutenant will use ink, the brigade staff, a typewriter. And in Budapest, it will be printed. The old woman will carry the telegram across the Vécsey Forest and when some one stops her at Mrs. Deák's tavern and asks her what is the news, she will answer: Oh, nothing at all, I'm only taking a telegram over to the village; but, you know the Sepsys' maid, that great,

big girl, was found in the barn with a handsome gendarme, and now they are going to sack her—"

He put aside the quartermaster's papers and walked along to the officers' mess. He had not been there as yet and he wanted to make the acquaintance of the officers of the battalion.

There were four little gnomes in the place, four young men with long beards. Why do they wear beards? He had shaved every day, this morning, too. He was told that they were thinking of leave. Some day they expect to go on leave and they want to arrive home with martial features. They were not particularly glad to see him. Their attitude towards him was rather cold. One of them asked him where he proposed to eat. Where you do, he said quite frankly, but they looked at him rather angrily. At last, one of them spoke up:

"You'll have to talk that over with the major. You are not entitled to eat in the officers' mess."

He felt insulted. He clicked his heels, bowed, and left the mess. The tables were already laid there and the officers of the battalion came hurrying from every direction.

"Funny that I felt so hurt—First, Kamincki, then Peti, and Sipos, too, and shells fell all night long and machine-guns barked, and men were using me as a target, on far-away Volhynian fields, on a battlefield, on the edge of the Swamp of Rokitno: my wife, perhaps, will never see me again, and I may never see my son grow up—and then I feel insulted because of the grub and write a brief to the Quarter-master-General—The Russians had better not attack now, I am in a nasty humour—

In the afternoon, he was told to report at battalion head-quarters. The major shook hands with him and told him to take good care of the officers' mess. There hasn't been anything served there lately but boiled beef and mashed potatoes. See to it that we have something else, and not only potatoes. It would be a good thing if you could get hold of some vegetables. It doesn't matter if they are tinned. And try to get this brand of wine. I know they have it, don't let yourself be bullied. He hoped that the whole system would

change now. He had much faith in the aspirant. He knew that the quartermaster was indebted to the aspirant. Go at him. Don't be sorry for him. The quartermaster has some Prague ham hidden away. Don't get frightened. A new era dawns. A new world. Until now, we have been at the quartermaster's mercy, Now we'll go for him. Give him no quarter. You did very well last night, aspirant. I am sending your name in for the Silver Medal for Bravery in Action. Be very careful. Draw up your menus ahead of time, for a full week, preferably. And if you could—

The major's voice trembled:

"If you could get hold of some milk—"

"I certainly will—"

"But not condensed milk. I hate it. Real milk, genuine milk—"

"I'll get some, sir. I'll get hold of a cow. There's enough pasture behind the lines."

When next he entered the mess they did not say a word. They knew already that he had some devilish influence. Now they were no longer annoyed that one more man—and one not even entitled to it—would shorten their rations. They told him he might stay wherever he pleased. The major will give the command of your platoon to some one else, all you'll have to do will be to take good care of the food. He might come and go as he pleased. If he so wished he would not have to go to the front line at all.

A wagon called for him the next afternoon, and took him back some five miles. Into the quartermaster's realm. He gave the brief to the captain. He read it immediately and said that it was superb. Excellent work. But it had to be typed. They brought in Mr. Kun.

And at night, while shells burst in the distance and the roar of an occasional gun was heard, he, sitting in a wicker chair and smoking a Memphis cigarette, dictated the brief to Mr. Kun.

He did not go back to the front-line trenches until the fate of the brief was known. Two days later, there came confidential information from the Quartermaster-General's headquarters. The brief was very good. He went to the captain

and demanded everything he could think of. Milk. A cow, or fresh milk every day. Fine bottled wine. Coloured liqueurs. He demanded hazel nuts. He liked hazel nut cakes very much. If you haven't any, order some from Lutsk. There's plenty of hazel nuts in Lutsk. Chocolate. Vanilla. Everything. Tinned vegetables. Anything he could think of. He wanted a cookery-book. If you haven't any, get one.

He was blackmailing the captain.

He got everything and the captain smiled.

He said he could think of nothing he hadn't got. Or couldn't get.

His wagon was laden heavily when he got back to the line. He brought along a menu for a week, and the little bearded cornets and all the other bearded officers shook their heads in amazement.

They said all these things had hitherto been stolen from them.

The major took him to his own dugout. Then he pulled a bottle out of his pocket and placed it on the table. He told the major that, hereafter, a bottle like that would stand on his table every morning, a bottle full of milk.

The major immediately uncorked the bottle and poured some into a glass. He drank the fresh milk greedily and then sent for his orderly officer.

While they were waiting for the orderly officer to come, the major walked silently but happily to and fro. The orderly officer arrived, saluted, and the major turned to him:

"The aspirant hasn't got his decoration for his behaviour on the 26th as yet. Who knows when it will arrive? We shall recommend him for promotion. That goes through quicker."

He walked out to the front-line trench and visited the men of one of the platoons in their dugout. Some of them slept on straw strewn on the ground, others smoked their pipes. Silence and smoke and the stench of many unwashed bodies. Suffocating silence and suffocating stench. Something burnt and crackled in the hands of one of the soldiers. Small pieces of bacon on a peg. Paper among the pieces of bacon. The soldier lighted the pieces of paper and their flame roasted the bacon. That was what crackled.

He went nearer to the soldier and was surprised to see that it was Csutor's son, János. He had known that he was here somewhere, but he had not known where.

"Is that you, János?"

"It's me."

János showed neither surprise nor joy. He did not even look at him.

"You see, János, I am here too."

"Yes," said János, and looked up. Mild approval shone from his eyes now.

"And what are you doing there?"

"Smoking bacon."

"Why do you smoke it?"

"Because it stinks. You can't eat it, it stinks so. So I smoke it a little. Then you can't smell it so much. All of us do it."

He gave János a tin of meat and said that he would look after their food. He asked him whether he wanted to send any message home. He would write if he wanted him to. He would tell his wife that he had met him.

"Don't write," said János. "My wife knows that I am here."

"That's all right. I'll write home to my own people and ask them to tell your wife that you are in good health. And that I am here too."

János smiled oddly, wryly. He shrugged his shoulders.

"Don't write anything."

He went back to the officers' mess. The tables were being laid for tea. The major was also there. He went to the major.

"If you don't mind, sir, I will try to improve the food of the ranks, too."

The major frowned.

"Don't be such a hero, my son. Don't take too much upon yourself. You won't be able to attend to anything well. You've done enough already. I am satisfied with you. Don't force matters."

It seemed to him that some of his comrades were dissatisfied. Two of them deliberately avoided him. He asked them whether there was anything the matter.

"Yes," they said.

The coloured liqueurs had been distributed and those who had received anisette were angry now.

"But all of them were Bacewsky liqueurs—"

"Yes, the brand was all right, but how could you have given anisette to a lieutenant when the cornets got orange? Damned carelessness—"

He promised those who had received anisette that they would be compensated for it.

They trusted him and said that if he would be more careful in the future, everything would be all right.

He managed to get fifty tins out of the quartermaster for János' platoon. He could not get any more. The captain said that it was very difficult to get things for the ranks. When he saw that it was really hard he gave it up. But, for the time being, he was satisfied with himself. He wanted to pat himself on the shoulder. He had done a good deed.

He had a kind heart—

Suddenly he became aware of a nameless something that rose within him and addressed him, mockingly and contemptuously:

Hey, do you expect public acknowledgment of it? Do you think it will be mentioned in the newspapers?

Suddenly he became aware of the fact that he blushed and was ashamed of his whole charitable action. He had merely helped a beggar.

"Take it, my good man."

"But now I don't want to see you for a year—"

CHAPTER XVII

THE quartermaster remarked one day that he was preparing a great surprise for him. A very pleasant surprise. He also said that the expected attack could not very well be delayed much longer and that the matter, thank God, seemed to be settled. He might need, though, one more brief. But not more than one.

The surprise really was a pleasant one. There must have

come further confidential information from the Quartermaster-General's headquarters, for the captain called him in and told him, in a very satisfied manner, that the thing had come off very well. He had not wanted to mention the surprise any sooner, because he had been afraid he might need him any day, but now he was informed that the latest brief was good for at least two months. The surprise was that he would be sent home for a week. The captain had already reported in the present circumstances that he could not satisfactorily provide the officers' mess with the desired things and was obliged to send him home for eight or ten days to buy new supplies.

And in fact, the major sent for him soon afterwards. He told him that it was found to be necessary to send him home; and warned him to attend to his duties most conscientiously. He would go to Budapest. The necessary papers would be ready for him by to-night and he would leave early the next day.

In an hour, he was full of errands and commissions. Répás wanted his camera and Mitics asked him to take home his inkwell carved out of a shell. His orderly asked him to take home and post from Budapest his sweater and his heavy winter boots. The major gave him two huge cases and asked him personally to deliver them to his wife. Lieutenant Fridek invited him to his dugout, the same in which, on the evening of his arrival, he had asked him whether he was a good soldier. Lieutenant Fridek and his company were again in reserve. It was the middle of April now, and quite warm, but Lieutenant Fridek still wore that same jaunty white lambskin hussar's cap. The lieutenant cried, he said: My poor, dear, darling little wife, my poor, dear, darling little wife—

"Give her this letter. Take it to her personally. If you cross the Margit Bridge and turn to your left, you'll find our house close by—"

The lieutenant cried bitterly:

"I put everything in the letter. But I'll repeat it to you. Tell them to take a good photograph of themselves, and you bring it back with you. She, and my daughter, Jucika. And then, on the day you start back, send for the package. My

wife will give you a package. I beg of you, take good care of it. My wife's speciality is goose-liver with dates. She will have in that package such a goose-liver. I'll give you a bite of it—you have never yet tasted anything like it in all your life—"

Lieutenant Fridek cried. It occurred to him that it was true; he had never yet had goose-liver with dates in all his life.

He was on his way home.

He saw again the soldiers' graves, he saw again the frontier, he saw again the little villages, the green fields, the unsuspicious goats, the cynical cows. Wise shepherd-dogs slept in front of the houses and station-masters saluted the train with appalling obsequiousness.

His leave of absence contained the route he had to follow. He had to go through Cracow. He was not permitted to make a detour, to go home. He telegraphed to his family to come to Budapest for a few days. They might be together for a short time.

By the time he had attended to his errands his wife and son had arrived. But their great joy was marred by a feeling of constraint. There was something they could not talk about. They had to keep silent about something.

They did not talk about it. About that something. About what was going on out there.

They were both sad and joyous.

They walked about the town. They dropped in at *cafés*, *confiseries*. Young actors and actresses had tea at Hauer's. Monocles paraded in Váczi Street. People were sitting on the terrace in front of Hangli's. They chatted, gossiped. Men wore their monocles just as they had worn them before the war. On the Corso, on the Danube quay, they gossiped just as in peace. Their vocabulary was somewhat enlarged, though. They did not say: Jancsi has got his degree. They said: Jancsi has caught a cold at the front. Now he is up in the Tátra. Last year, Jancsi had caught a cold on the skating rink. Now he had caught a cold at the front. But the Tátra had always been his favourite place to get cured. Gentlemen were waiting for chorus girls at stage-doors. There was a new waiter in the Napoleon-room of the *Café New York*. And one on the balcony. The old ones had died in the war. They had

to be replaced. Charity-workers were busy. People, however, while sipping their coffee, suspected them of petty thefts. But they suspected the voluntary nurses also. They suspected them of trying to catch husbands. Or of things even worse. But the charity-workers and the nurses had the newspapers and magazines on their side, which printed their photographs and praised them unreservedly.

As a matter of fact, the papers were terrible. They had incredibly fantastic stories about the front. He picked up a paper, and saw an article about a bathing establishment written in such terms that the innocent reader must have thought that soldiers, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, did nothing but bathe and change clothes. It seemed to him that the soldiers cared for nothing but to retail jokes to newspaper correspondents.

At home, they knew five or six different types of soldiers.

The papers gave the impression that there were soldiers who, after saying something sentimental to the reporters, enthusiastically leapt on to the enemy bayonets. These either died or were wounded inside of twenty-four hours. These deaths and injuries were described in the papers as if the victims had ordered them. As if they depended on the soldiers! And they were served in all sorts of sauces to make them more palatable: lice and damp earth and wet clothes. As if a great feeling of brotherliness were swinging them all forward, as if one great idea had kneaded them into one close, immortal, eternal and sublime mass. The forlorn and card-playing, groaning, drinking, impotent, unbalanced, torn, feverish, dying, rotting, hopeful, trembling millions and millions.

He was walking with his wife in Váczi Street. They met a major. He saluted. The major looked at him.

"Where is your sword, aspirant?" he asked.

Indeed, he had not been wearing his sword lately. He did not need the sword. He was not angry at all. As a matter of fact he, too, was surprised. Yes, where *is* my sword? Yes, I ought to wear it.

"Are you on the sick list, that you have no sword?" continued the major. "Show me your papers."

Passers-by gathered round them.

He did not think of retorting. He did not intend to be impertinent.

The passers-by, to be sure, seemed to be in sympathy with him. They seemed to be on his side. They eyed the major angrily. The major was perfumed, he wore patent leather shoes, he was elegant. And he urged him to show his papers in a haughty and supercilious manner. He, on the other hand, wore awkward-looking, big, yellow boots, and there was a little brass plaque on his cap. A little brass plaque with the proud inscription: IV Army Corps. In the excited silence, he spoke up wearily, quietly, hesitantly:

"I don't wear my sword at the front, either, sir—"

The passers-by were electrified. Their eyes shone. Their lips formed encouraging smiles. The silence grew even more tense. He continued more definitely.

"I don't know whether you know it, sir, but we never wear swords at the front. And I don't believe I have to be afraid of anything in Váczi Street. I believe I am safe here, even without my sword.—"

The street cheered. They shouted in glee.

The fear and anxiety of scores of wives, children, fathers, brothers, slackers, shirkers and malingerers all at once thawed. They gave vent to their hidden, veiled emotions.

The major could not even take down his name. Unless he wanted to create a scandal, he had to disappear as soon as possible. He had to disappear or else something might happen. For, in this unexpected newly created atmosphere, queer and new bacilli multiplied rapidly. But he soon disappeared, and thus nothing remained but a story which was spread about town gleefully and enthusiastically. Just as enthusiastically as the news that, on the night of the 20th, we had succeeded in repulsing an attack in the Kol-Malin region, suffering only slight losses.

People, it seemed, somehow imagined that there were only a certain number of casualties. That there was a Corpse Corps to which only a certain number of dead men might be detailed. They must have thought, even, that the man whose face was cut off to-day was permitted and able to pick it up

again, glue it on, and ask for a new job to-morrow. They must have thought that the dead men came to life again. Or else they would not have sewed such piles of underwear so diligently. They would not have desired so fervently contracts to deliver so many pants. Although, of course, some were detailed to sew pants. The girls were detailed to Trysting Corps. Their duty was to smile at soldiers and to shed tears when meeting invalids. Their duty was to be touched. Everybody was expected to do his duty. The man who smoked stinking bacon leaning against a damp wall as well as the one cracking jokes in a *café*. This unity was amazing. There had never been such a united point of view.

They did not know that every soldier had an individual fate.

His business now was to be with his wife for a few days and to buy supplies in the market for the officers' mess. And to attend to commissions.

He did his duty conscientiously.

His mother, of course, had prophesied that he would do everything he was ordered to do very punctually. Very conscientiously.

On the last day, he called for Lieutenant Fridek's goose-liver—with dates—and the photograph. And for Répás' camera.

He took leave of his family once more. They did not mention that certain something with one word. His wife's and his son's duty was to wait for him. To be sad and to be tortured. To tremble for him. Who had given them this job? It didn't matter. It was their duty, they had to accept it.

They embraced each other on the platform, their hearts were infinitely heavy and infinitely laden with sorrow. He kissed his son with a long kiss. Then he boarded the train for Cracow.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE train was flying towards Lublin, and Polish legionaries were writing picture-cards. Lublin had been mentioned quite often in the *communiqués* he thought he ought to

remember something about it. It had such a nice, antique name. But he could not think of anything in connection with it. The city was visible already, perched on a distant hill. On the last day, he had received a letter from Lieutenant Fridek notifying him that his promotion to the grade of First Class Aspirant had arrived. Lieutenant Fridek affixed the regimental stamp to his letter and informed him that he might sew on his new badges of rank immediately. And if anything happened he could use this letter as proof that he was not masquerading.

His promotion made him glad, it meant a little money. If the war lasted long, he might even save something. And then, too, he brought great things to his comrades at the front. He had delivered the major's cases. He was bringing Répás' camera, he was bringing tins of peas, and preserves, and tender young kohlrabi, and mackerel in oil, Swiss cheese, salami. And yes, photographs for Lieutenant Fridek, and the goose-liver with dates is also in the package. His orderly was taking care of that, his orderly who travelled in a third-class carriage. He was a decent boy; one could trust him. Schwarzkopf was taking care of the photographs and the goose-liver with dates. He would now be able to pay back Fridek the joy he had caused him by the promotion. A pity he had not been able to visit his mother and father, and that they had not been able to come down to Budapest. They were happy now because they thought he was in a safe position. But he might be detailed to some other job in an hour, and it was possible that they would never again meet. But why should they detail him to another post? Now, when he had done favours to all of them, when he had improved the food, when—

Schwarzkopf entered his compartment. He was surprisingly and suspiciously polite. He clicked his heels.

"I beg to report, sir, they ate up a package."

"What did they do? What did they eat?"

"They ate up a package you gave me—

"When did they eat it? How did they eat it? Who did?"

"Last night, while I was asleep, they opened it and ate up everything in it. Other infantrymen are also on the train, and they thought it was my package and they wanted to kid

me. They ate up the package we were taking to Lieutenant Fridek—"

It cut into him.

Fridek was already smacking his lips on the Volhynian battlefield and watching the western horizon. Waiting for him. For him and the goose-liver with dates. What to say now? How to say it? Perhaps it wouldn't be so terrible. He thought he might buy some delicacy in Lutsk in order to pacify Fridek. No, nothing could take the place of the goose-liver with dates.

He tried to encourage himself. Try to be sensible, aspirant. Doctor, for God's sake, come to your senses! What are you afraid of? There's a war going on, a war! Dentists' advertisements are being buried and the targets shoot back at you. Slender steel bullets chase our men and shells demolish dug-outs built of concrete. The shepherd's son dares not send a message home, he's afraid to tell his parents that he is in good health. The shepherds guard dynamite in the fields. Clusters of fire fall from the skies and legs are torn off together with the boots. Smile, aspirant, hatred faces hatred from Ypres to the Black Sea, millions wrestle and cry in agony, and white birch-wood crosses glisten on soldiers' graves throughout the Ukraine. What do you want of the goose-liver with dates, aspirant? Why don't you laugh, aspirant?

At the next station, an Austrian second lieutenant came into his compartment. They struck up a conversation. He told the lieutenant, with a forced smile on his lips, that he was going back to the front, that he was coming from Budapest, that the wife of his company-commander had sent with him a goose-liver with dates which the soldiers had taken from him and eaten. Unpleasantly interesting, eh?

The second lieutenant, somewhat suspiciously, looked at him through his spectacles. He asked whether it had happened at night.

"Yes, at night. Some soldiers who were in my orderly's carriage wanted to play a joke on him—he was entrusted with the package—and they ate up the goose-liver."

The second lieutenant gravely shook his head and coldly

remarked that he ought to have been more careful. Such a thing should never have happened. One should always attend most conscientiously to errands coming from superiors. But these youngsters are never careful enough. Such a thing could never happen to him; he solved all problems and took care of all commissions with the utmost attention; he would have brought the package into his compartment. In that case, the catastrophe would have been avoided.

He began to explain to the second lieutenant what they were facing. It was possible that the attack had already begun, that the Russians were already attacking. He told him that his platoon had suffered losses, that he had been recommended for the silver medal, second class, that the hussar attacks at the beginning of the war were insane things, that the ranks ought to be better provided, that there was a strong possibility of a great battle, that if his regiment should be put to flight it would be unable to retreat in an orderly fashion across the swamps, that the narrow road paved with boards could not possibly accommodate it, that the men would drive each other into the Rokitno marshes, that they would be all lost there because all of them would want to cross the swamp at once, that they wouldn't find enough roads there, that they would fall into the swamp, all of them, and drown there—

Whereupon the second lieutenant remarked that all this did not necessarily mean that the company-commander's package should be neglected, and that such a thing could not be explained away. The man ought to be punished, of course, but commanders are always responsible for the acts of their men.

All other thoughts left him. Responsibility for the lost package tortured him from the soles of his feet to the roots of his hair. He could not sleep a wink all night long. He did not even look out when morning came, he was not curious when they reached the railhead, he could not even remember the soft and warm cheeks of his son, or his wife's wet eyes. The thought that he would never again see his father and his mother no longer grieved him. He quivered at the thought of what the lieutenant would say.

Nonsense. The newspapers said that Brussilov had already begun his offensive and was concentrating barrage fire upon the barbed wire all along the front. He was trying to break through at all costs in the direction of Lutsk, but our heroic and brave troops successfully repulsed the Russian's attempts.

And now to worry over a goose-liver with dates! A grown-up man! Shame on him.

The quartermaster's detachment was packing when he arrived.

Dull but continuous droning was heard from the direction of the front. They said they had to be ready every minute. They said it was "hot" up there, that no one went forward unless it was absolutely necessary. They advised him to stay with them.

No, he would not. He left for the front immediately. The nearer he approached it, the louder and sharper the noise of the bombardment became. He could no longer distinguish its components: artillery fire, machine-gun fire, the sound of exploding mines, rifle fire. Indeed, it sounded as if a giant were beating a colossal kettledrum. The drum-beat was infinite and fatal, long and breath-taking, steadily growing and terrifyingly quickening.

The men were not in the trenches. Huge cellars were dug deep into the earth (the soldiers called them fox-holes), and all were in them. Twelve feet deep. Whole companies, whole battalions, perhaps the whole garrison were hiding in these fox-holes. Only a few sentries were posted in the trenches. They said that they would stay down there while the barrage continued, and would return to the trenches only when it ceased. The moment the barrage stopped they would leave the holes. The Russians always stopped the barrage before an attack.

A queer and horrifying death-house, deep down in the earth. There they were, hiding and thrown together in nervous, anxious expectation. There were some who went down on their knees and prayed, there were some who drank, there were some who, almost choked to death by the immense quantities of nicotine they had consumed, continued to smoke their pipes, their cigars or their cigarettes.

The men tried to remain motionless and immovable. A vain attempt.

From time to time, names were called out. Then these, with collapsing knees, full of the fear of death, but impotently stubborn and cowardly submissive, tumbled out of the fox-holes, driven by a blind Fate.

They tumbled out into the sunshine, into the murderous din, to the sentry-posts—

The major was not there. They said he had suddenly fallen ill and had gone back.

They said there was a new battalion-commander.

He went to him and reported that he had just arrived from Budapest, had brought supplies, had—

The new battalion-commander was not a major. He was only a captain. He was sitting on the ground drinking tea. He was sitting on a folded-up blanket covered with a sheet, and a cup of tea was before him. He did not wait until the end. He asked him how he dared disturb him at the table. He asked him where had he learned such civilian manners. He would show him! And he would teach him that promotions should be reported. How dared he show himself at all? He had already heard of him. He knew everything. He would teach him! He would show him! Now, away! He would look over the things he had brought some other time.

He was humiliated. He looked for Lieutenant Fridek, he tried to find him in the dimness of the death-house. He wanted to give him the photographs, and his wife's letter, if—

Fridek noticed him, pulled him aside, took him to a corner where the captain could not see them.

He gave Lieutenant Fridek the photographs and the letter. Lieutenant Fridek read the letter and began to cry. In a trembling voice, deeply touched, he asked:

"Where is the package, my son? The goose-liver with dates—"

He told all about it.

Lieutenant Fridek's face suddenly grew dark. His eyes were bloodshot. He ground his teeth. His voice drowned the barrage, drowned the misery, the trembling of the men, drowned the war:

"It's an outrage—It's disgraceful—scandalous—I'll show you—outrageous—I'll teach you, don't you worry—And I wanted to help you—I wanted to help you—"

He stood there, in the death-house, an outcast. Like a leper.

He saw there was no place for him there. He found Répás, gave him the camera and tumbled out.

He left the fox-hole and started back, towards the realm of the quartermaster.

CHAPTER XIX

HE complained to the quartermaster-captain about his reception. The captain, however, had no time to bother with him. He was issuing orders, supervising packing, looking over figures, calculations, lists, he was feverishly active. The quartermaster-captain was about to move. He told him that they would stay there only until noon next day at latest. Suddenly he turned to him:

"Give me an account of the money."

"Of what money?"

"The money I gave you."

"I took the things to the front line. A few things are still here—"

"I don't mean that. What do I care whether you took it to the line or didn't? I want the bills. Haven't you brought the bills with you?"

"I never thought of that."

The front roared threateningly, mysteriously, menacingly.

"That's too bad, you should have. Now you'd better draw up some sort of account. I'll try to put it through. Be careful, divide the supplies to last for three months, multiply the number of days with the number of officers, the final number with the extra allowance, and that's how you'll get a correct statement."

The telephone rang.

The battalion-commander was speaking, from the fox-hole.

He asked whether the aspirant was there, and if so what

was he doing there? Who gave him permission to go back to the transport-lines? He ordered him to return at once.

The quartermaster gave him one of the receivers, but he would not let him talk. He answered for him. He told the captain that he had ordered the aspirant to come back because he had not rendered him an account yet. There were many fine delicacies still here, he would not entrust any one else with them. The aspirant would bring them up the line at night, when they would get up more safely under cover of darkness. He would give him a few men to carry the things up.

"Has the aspirant brought up any of the Swiss cheese?" the quartermaster-captain asked naively.

"No. The aspirant hasn't brought up any Swiss cheese at all, although we need it very badly. We can't cook now, we can't use the vegetables. We need the Swiss cheese very much—"

The quartermaster gave him a sly wink, hung up the receiver and smiled:

"Never mind him—"

"I certainly do mind him, I assure you, I do. I'll go back at once."

He had struck up a friendship with the quartermaster, they were great friends, the quartermaster thought highly of him. But now he shook his head disapprovingly and addressed him in a frigid tone:

"Well, you may do whatever you damned well please. But you will not go until you have given me an account of your expenditure."

He had to sit down. He took out a pencil and began to work out how much he had spent for the individual items. The night was slowly approaching and he was still multiplying and subtracting. He tried to remember all the items. The kohlrabi. How much had it been? And then the peas. How much? He used fractions. He was sweating.

Embittered, he went over to the quartermaster:

"Captain, I can't do it. I'd rather pay back every penny you gave me. I haven't had my pay yet. Keep that, too. I'll never finish it."

"My son, I don't want your pay. It's there, in an envelope. Take it. It's yours. Here. Sign this. But it isn't the money that I need. I need the accounts. I have already forwarded a receipt for the money. That's already entered in the books. I don't need the money. I need the accounts. I have to forward those too. I need them."

He took his money and began to work on his calculations again.

Night came, and the distant front seemed like a sparkling meadow of fire. The shells burst but a mile or two from the transport lines and thousands and thousands of glowing sparks flew into the night.

Eight times six, eight times six, eight times six, he repeated it mechanically. His lips trembled. Once or twice he discovered that he had made a mistake, that he had to start the whole thing all over again. A groan filtered in through the open window. A wagon rattled by in the darkness. He went out and saw that the wagon was laden with wounded soldiers, thrown on top of each other like ragged old sacks.

The quartermaster remarked that only those groaned whose bones were broken.

And those who had gone mad.

He knew that, because a silly thing had happened in the afternoon. Kovasznai had gone mad. He had been with the transport. A simple farmer, he had been sent to the front line with the cookers, and when a bullet had whistled by him, he had gone mad. In a second, just like that. Such things do happen.

After midnight, the captain in the fox-hole telephoned again.

He telephoned that it was now dark enough to bring up the Swiss cheese. And some salami, if there was any. And bread.

He gave the quartermaster the accounts he had somehow drawn up. The quartermaster did not even glance at it, he just said: All right. He said he was to take Swiss cheese, and salami, and rolls. Fresh rolls, baked to-day.

It took hours for them to pack the things he had to take up. The quartermaster said it didn't matter whether they hurried or not. He regretted that they were parting. He had

done him a great favour. The transport would move as soon as dawn came. They couldn't stay here. He knew it. They would go back a couple of miles. The food they could not carry with them would be destroyed. But he hoped he could take away a lot. The quartermaster did not fear the court-martial now; now he could account for everything. This was what he had been waiting for. This attack. Now, whatever the Quartermaster-General might find missing was left here —or destroyed.

He was amazed. What did he mean to do? To leave one's post just like that? What was he thinking of? Stupid clerk— did he think that the Russians could possibly cross that field out there with all the barbed wire? and the trenches? and the machine-guns? and the bayonets? What did he think, anyway—that the defenders would simply surrender and the Russians walk in? What did he suppose, this wretched quartermaster? Why, he had never been up there—what did he know? In three days, everything would be as it had been.

Why, if an attack came, the sentries would report it. Then the men would leave the fox-holes, the flame-throwers be brought into action—Incredible!

The quartermaster took leave of him very warmly.

"Listen, if you want to stay, stay, or come with me, I'll take you along, I'll shoulder the responsibility. I'll send some one else up with the food."

"I can't captain. I can't do it. It's high time I was off. No one can avoid his fate—and I don't want to—"

"Don't you want to send any message home? Shall I write anything?"

"No, I'll write to-morrow myself."

He picked up the receiver and reported to the captain that he had been unable to start before. He promised to hurry. He was bringing fresh rolls with him.

The captain said, very well. Fresh rolls are fine. He was glad. It was very "hot" up there. It's lucky for him that things turned out as they did. Report as soon as you arrive. I will think it over. I may forget about your incorrect behaviour. Hurry up, anyway. Light the fire in the cooker

as soon as you start so that by the time you arrive the food may be ready.

It was dawn when he started with the transport. He marched, with the men, slowly after the cooker. A refreshing, invigorating, happy little breeze tickled his throat. He felt the elasticity of the slightly soaked soil beneath his feet and he deeply inhaled the fragrance of the dewy grass.

The column moved slowly. The men found something to attend to every minute. They stopped. They said the fire ought to be lighted now. They pottered around. He urged them to hurry, but they paid no attention to him. They opened the kettle, stirred the soup, closed it again. They said it was no good. The fire went out. From where they started the front was but an hour's march, they should have arrived a long time ago. They had been marching for four hours.

They reached the corduroy road. The hill was beyond it, and beyond the hill, the front line. The fox-holes, the sentries, Lieutenant Fridek, whose goose-liver with dates had been eaten up by infantrymen on the way.

The water splashed, sudden gushes rose in the swamp here and there. He thought frogs jumped in the water.

Suddenly a high jet of mud rose not far from them and one of the soldiers fell into the water.

The men stopped. They waited for their comrade to come to the surface. Then they said: He's done for. They said they were not frogs—bullets.

Bullets splashed in the water.

The horses backed and reared. The sergeant said they could not go any farther.

"Why not?"

"Because the horses won't do it. I'll go back and try another road. They won't go this way."

The cooker and its team ignored him. They simply turned round and left him there. The men all wanted to go with the cooker.

He had no authority over the cooker. And it was possible that they knew better which road to take.

"Some one must come with me—"

Nobody moved.

He took out his revolver.

"Three men will come with me and each of them will carry a sack. Rolls, cheese, salami—"

CHAPTER XX

THEY marched on, each of his men carrying a bag on his shoulders. One bag contained rolls, one salami, the third one cheese. The men also carried their rifles, and their packs. The nearer they got to the hill, the more frequently they heard invisible and strange insects buzz by. He knew they were bullets. And what whistled shrilly was also a bullet. What splashed the muddy water was also a bullet. The clouds above the hill showered splinters, the invisible drums beat a march of death, And yet it was not terrifying. Perhaps, because nothing had happened to him. He could not feel it; the fear of death could not start and revolt and shiver within him. He had put the revolver away. The three men marched resignedly; he did not need the revolver.

It was curious, he reflected. To-day was the first day that he had taken out his revolver. He had not taken it out of its holster in battle. He had not taken it out before the enemy. He had taken it out for the first time to-day. Because of the salami. No: because of discipline. Of course, of course! Nevertheless, the fact remained a fact: he had taken it out for the first time to-day, and one couldn't help it, one had to admit it, he had taken it out because of the cheese—

The May sun shone brightly, and the men carried their heavy burdens with drooping shoulders. The realization disturbed and stirred him. He wanted to make amends for having taken out the revolver. He could not go on with such a tremendous weight on his conscience, with such a blemish on his soul.

He stopped his men:

"Let's rest a little—"

He caressed them with his words, he spoke apologetically, he expected a friendly echo.

"We can't rest now, sir—We've got to get out of this hell—"

Something hissed and dived into the water, unknown forces stirred, cut, splashed the sea of mud.

Without stopping even for a second, the soldiers hurried forward, puffing and blowing, sweating, exhausted.

They reached the hill at the end of the corduroy road. Metal objects glistened in the sun, a few steps from him. He recognized them with joy. They were shell-fuses, of copper. He decided to take one home with him. A memento. They are worth something only when you pick them up yourself. He would certainly take one home. He raced up the hillside, for the shell-fuses. He did not stop the men, he knew he would easily be able to overtake them. He ran as lightly as if he had been chasing butterflies on the hillsides of Gercz, as if he had been running after flowers at the edge of the Vécsey Forest. Care-free and light-hearted, he picked up a fuse.

It burned his hand. The fuse was still hot. He reached for another one. It was already cold. He put it into his pocket and hurried after his men. He did not see them. He looked round. Where were they? He discovered them squatting in a freshly made shell-hole.

He dashed to them.

"What's this? What's going on here?"

The men pulled him down by his feet and pressed his head to the ground.

What was going on here?

The men pointed excitedly towards a curve in the hillside.

He saw soldiers standing there. About thirty of them. There might have been even more. But he could not see any more on account of the curve. They wore very long coats and their caps were of a peculiar shape.

The soldiers were barely fifty yards away. They yelled at them and waved their hands. He could not make out what they wanted. Who were they?

He had never before seen soldiers like them.

They all carried rifles. Why, they were Russians! But if they were Russians, why were they still wearing their equipment? Why did these Russians still carry their rifles?

Two long-coated men left the group and came towards them.

One of his men suddenly took his revolver out of its holster and threw it out of the shell-hole.

The long-coated men came running towards them, carrying their rifles at the trail.

What was to come next?

The two strangers shouted even louder now, they waved their hands even more frantically. But he could not imagine what they wanted of him.

They reached the shell-hole. One of them grabbed him by his right arm, the other one by his left. And they began to run with him. He could not keep pace with them, they ran much faster than he did, their legs were longer than his, and in the suddenly created atmosphere of uncertainty, he felt lost. They ran with him so fast that he almost broke his legs. Suddenly he lifted his feet in the air. Now he was hanging in the air, his feet dangling.

It occurred to him that he had often been playfully carried thus by his parents when still a little child.

They reached the group of long-coated men.

He realized now that they really were Russians. But how did they ever get here, and why had they still got their rifles?

The two Russians would not let go of him. Two others hurried back to the shell-hole for his men.

The Russians shouted at him, but he could not make out what they wanted.

They searched him. They took the shell-fuse out of his pocket and threw it far away. They shook his fountain pen menacingly before his nose. He took it out of the Russian's hand and demonstrated its use on his hand. He showed them his inky palm, whereupon they smiled and good-humouredly put it back in his pocket. They did not find any dangerous weapons on him.

His three men had also been brought to the group.

He regained his composure. He asked his men where they had left their sacks.

In the shell-hole.

He told the Russians, in sign language, that it would be a

good idea to bring over the sacks. He smacked his lips and moved his jaws. Thus he called to their attention the fact that the sacks contained food. The Russians hurried to the shell-hole once more and fetched them.

He opened them and showed the Russians the rolls. They pounced on them.

But he had collected his wits. He took their commander by the arm and began to talk to him in Hungarian, although he knew the Russian did not understand one word of it. But he interspersed his talk with signs, and somehow he managed to convey to the commander the idea that he wanted to distribute the rolls among them. And forthwith he began to deal them out. There were only about thirty of them. He gave each one two rolls. They took them quietly and with discipline. He gave two rolls to each of his men, too, and put two into his own bread-bag. To the commander, he gave four.

Then he took out his pocket-knife and began to distribute the salami and the cheese. Each portion was equally large, he was very just. Those who got their share turned aside and began to eat greedily. When he saw that some salami was left over, he gave every man a second helping.

"Come on, boys, here's your chance to get your bellies full," he said, and although the Russians did not understand a word of it, they smiled. They realised that what he said was by way of being a joke.

He distributed all the food he had, and then he found a bunch of papers at the bottom of the third sack. At first, he did not know what they were. He pulled out one sheet and a cold shiver ran down his spine.

How very awkward! He had forgotten all about them. There were handbills in the sack, about a thousand of them. Short, poignant proclamations. The idea had been to take them to the front line and to smuggle them over to the Russian lines. They were calls upon the Russian soldiers. In Russian. He had received a Hungarian translation of it so that he should know what they were about. A call upon the Russian soldiers! Throw away your arms! Surrender! You are fighting for a lost cause! Your commanders are deceiving

you, they will not tell you that we have won a decisive victory! They keep the fall of Kut-el-Amara a secret from you!

The Russian commander joined him and began to examine the sacks. He did not find anything in the first two. But he noticed the handbills in the last one. He did not look into the sack, however, he just sank his hand into it and searched around in it for a second. Nothing. Only paper.

Then he rose and kicked the sacks aside.

Two soldiers were detailed to take the four of them away. The commander gave his men an order of which he understood but one word: *kapitán*—

Well, *kapitán*. They apparently would take them to the captain. But, perhaps, *kapitán* meant "head" in the Russian? Perhaps the command contained some reference to his head, something about beheading—

The Russian commander shook hands with him and patted him on the back. Then he turned away and ordered his men to fall in. Some of them were still chewing at the rolls, the salami, the cheese.

They were taken back to the Russian lines.

They were led through the well-known communication trenches to the fox-holes. The familiar turns reminded him of the battalion-commander and Lieutenant Fridek. Perhaps they were taking him to them? What was happening to him, anyway? What had happened here? And if they were about to take him to the captain how was he going to account for the loss of the rolls? And for the salami? Was he going to be reprimanded again? For the cheese? Or for the handbills?

Nonsense!

One of his men sighed:

"We've been taken prisoners, sir—"

We have been taken prisoners—Yes—Yes—Nothing had happened because—because of Lieutenant Fridek—nothing because of the goose-liver with dates—Nothing because of the incorrect report—Nothing because of his civilian manners at the white table—

"We have been taken prisoners."

CHAPTER XXI

THEY reached the fox-holes. But he could see no crouching sentries now; the trenches swarmed with Russian soldiers. They were lying and squatting behind the parapets, firing. But they were firing in the opposite direction: in the direction of the quartermaster's billet. It was queer to see them shooting towards Lieutenant Fridek, towards the cornets who had grown their beards in vain, because they would now have no chance to show them at home. And he reflected that there would be no kicking because of the dinner tonight, no one would get insulted on account of the anisette. Perhaps even Fridek had forgotten to worry about the goose-liver with dates. And the captain too had other things to worry about than his civilian manners at the white table. The long-coated men and Csutor's son were shooting at each other now. They were shooting at each other right in front of him.

The two Russians who accompanied them stopped. Standing at attention, they shouted something to some one standing on the parapet. A Russian officer turned to them. His face was covered with dust, he carried at his side, a map and a revolver. Just like our officers. And he held a field-glass in his hand, too, just like our officers. The Russian officer turned to them, and he looked sad and dejected, as if he had been suddenly awakened from sleep. One of the Russians reported something. The officer nodded and looked straight at him. He felt that he had to say something. He raised his hand to his cap and saluted. But the Russian officer continued to gaze at him absent-mindedly. Embarrassed, he reached to his collar. The collar of his shirt, according to the custom in the field, was pulled out to cover the collar of his tunic. Now he lifted his shirt-collar and showed the Russian officer his brand-new badges of rank. The Russian up there nodded again. From up there, from Death's threshold, the Russian officer nodded down to him, to his comrade, and politely raised his hand to his cap. Then he turned away. He

merely begged his pardon for not being able to entertain him. For not being able to be with his guest. Sorry. Please don't take it ill of me. He said something to the men who were escorting him. Apparently he gave them some instructions. Then he saluted again and turned away.

A soldier standing next to the officer now turned round and stared at them. The Russian soldier stared at them, then of a sudden, he began to yell and to shout. His face was bloody, there were black blotches on his cheeks, his hair was dishevelled and patches of it protruded from below his cap. The Russian soldier shouted and shook his fists and cursed and gesticulated with his rifle, then suddenly raised the rifle to his shoulder and aimed at him. He saw the Russian's bloodshot eye taking aim, he saw the little black hole in the muzzle.

He let out a yell. He could not understand what the Russian soldier said, but he felt that something terrible was in store for him,and when he saw the little black hole,he began to yell.

He did not understand the Russian, but he saw what he wanted, he knew that the Russian would not understand him, either, but he knew what to say:

"You cowardly devil! You swine! Now that I have no rifle with me! Now that I'm a prisoner!"

He was furious. He tore open his tunic, thrust out his chest and banged it with his fist!

"Shoot here, louse! Shoot here, you dog; shoot, swine!"

The officer up on the parapet sadly and calmly took out his revolver and pointed it at his man:

"Andrej—"

The soldier suddenly grew calm. He let the rifle drop and turned away. Then he raised the rifle again and took aim. But now he aimed it at Fridek.

The Russian officer saluted again. Then he looked no more at him. He buttoned up his tunic and excitedly, red in the face, marched off with the Russian soldiers. They took him to a captain. A machine-gun captain with a long beard. He was calm now. The Russians, when they reported, said: *Kapitán*. So this word really meant captain. So he would not

be beheaded. The captain did not want to talk to them. He was busy with the machine-gun and angrily waved them aside. But he did throw one little glance at them. He caught this glance and, lifting his shirt-collar again, showed the captain the handsome narrow gold and yellow stripes and the three shining stars. The badges of a First Class Aspirant. The Russian captain leaped to his feet, left his machine-gun for a second, shook hands with him, then told the two soldiers where to take him and the three other prisoners.

They were now walking in a narrow communication trench. It was so narrow that two men could walk side by side only with difficulty. Russian soldiers came running towards them, they were hurrying to the front line trenches. They had to press themselves close against the wall of the trench, and he even pulled in his stomach, in order to let the enemy pass by comfortably. They did not care for the prisoners. A curious mixture of doggedness and unpleasant anxiety was written on their features.

A strange smell pervaded these trenches. A sour smell. The odour of raw leather. A smell different from the one in his own trenches. These troops had a different odour from that of his own men.

No wonder that ants recognize their enemy from their smell. Different ants have different odours. And men are amazed when they read about this in a book—

These troops were going against Fridek. And against the captain. And against Répás. And against Csutor's son. They were out to kill Csutor's son. That lean fellow was leading them, the one that had darted by without looking at him. It was possible that, in an hour, the lean fellow would also shout: "Shoot here, you louse." Yes, what did that soldier think, anyway? He must have been a stupid and unchivalrous man. For—after all—a peasant could also be chivalrous, he could also be sober and human. He could even be clever. He should have known that he—yes—that he was not supposed to shoot backwards—His business was to shoot forward —He was not supposed to shoot at the poor prisoners. But? But at poor Répás? At the poor bearded cornets! Well, yes! That's the regulation—that's the regulation—but then, after all—

Fortunately the officer had seen at once what the soldier was about. Immediately he had pointed his revolver at him. Immediately he had made him harmless. The Russian officer had pointed his revolver at the soldier. Just as he had done himself,—this morning. He too had pointed his revolver at his own men. Was that also a regulation? Yes. Discipline. War cannot be carried on without discipline. But, after all—

They marched along the trench and it occurred to him that the little old woman would, after all, cross the Vécsey Forest with the telegram.

Fridek will report that he has disappeared. The captain will report it to Mr. Kun, from there the news will go on in a typewritten report and, next Saturday, his name will be printed in the casualty lists. Dead, missing, wounded. His name will be among the "missing." They will surely wire to his relatives that he has disappeared. The woman carrying the telegram will undoubtedly stop at Mrs. Deák's tavern, near Pusztahegy. She will tell them that she is delivering a telegram. The telegram will arrive on Friday. Father will put on his spectacles. His poor wife—how she will cry! And poor mother, how her heart will ache! Poor, poor mother, she will regret that she ever said anything about not worrying for him. It will hurt her deeply. Pain will twitch her features and she will cry bitterly. She will remember the day when she called him to her bedroom and said to him: I don't worry for you, my son, you will know your way about—you will come back—And then he will write that he has been taken prisoner, and then all of them will be happy and poor mother will be right after all. But how could any one have known it in advance?

Hadn't he come through a field plastered with shells? Hadn't he come through the enemy lines? Didn't they want to shoot him after he had been captured? Didn't that angry Russian soldier take aim at him? Didn't death buzz and whistle and hiss around him and above him? How had his mother known that he would get out of all this without a scratch? How could she have known that? And now—Was it so certain that he was safe? How could he have known it?

Who knew what was waiting for him? Perhaps this was only the beginning—

One of the Russian soldiers had been walking, for the past quarter of an hour or so, in the open field. Now he suddenly jumped back into the trench. He grinned, happily, and showed him his leg. He had got a bullet in his leg, just below the knee. He was happy now, because he had a wound. He limped along with shining eyes, and radiant face. But what would happen to them? What next—?

They had been walking already for an hour and a half.

They had already passed the artillery batteries, they had already passed the transport lines. Now they had come to a charming little spring. Near by there was a tent, and soldiers were crowding round it. The tent was at the top of a knoll. They climbed it. There a bearded Russian officer received them. They shook hands like friends, and it was clear that the Russian wanted to talk with him. But the Russian spoke neither Hungarian nor German. They could not talk. But they shook each other's hand several times.

He remembered that there were several tablets of chocolate and a pint of *szilvorium*, along with his safety razor, in his bread-bag. Fine Grec *szilvorium*, which his father had sent to him at Budapest, by his wife. He took out the bottle and offered a drink to the Russian officer. The Russian uncorked it, sniffed at it, then suspiciously gave it back.

Of course. First he must take a gulp of it, he must show him that it was not poison. Of course.

He took a big gulp, but before he could take the bottle from his lips the Russian officer tore it out of his hands—and lifted it to the sky with a joyous smile.

The good, old Grec *szilvorium* flowed noisily out of the greenish bottle and rushed cordially down the Russian officer's throat, gurgling merrily. At the threshold of the infinite Sarmatian steppes, the fine old Grec *szilvorium* gurgled in the hands of an officer of the Czar . . .

CHAPTER XXII

THE Russian officer took a deep gulp of the *szilvorium*, then warmly shook hands with him. He told him, in pantomine,

to take off his tunic. He did not understand this. The Russian pointed to his collar, went through the pantomine again, pointed to the collar again.

He did not know, he could not imagine, why he should take off his tunic. What did the Russian want, why did he need the tunic, wasn't the *szilvorium* enough, did he want to take his tunic, too?

But he took off his tunic, and the Russian officer gave it to one of his men. The soldier nodded and disappeared in the tent.

He was disconcerted, but the Russian patted him on the back and smiled and assured him that there was nothing to worry about. He advised him, with his hands, not to get excited.

He sat quietly, a few thousand feet from the scene of the horrible butchery, in a foreign land, on a foreign knoll, at the edge of the Sarmatian steppes, with a few tablets of chocolate in his bread-bag, with a safety-razor in his pocket. He sat quietly in his shirtsleeves, with his Doctor of Laws degree, in the enemy's country, far away from the green hills above which gently towered the white-topped Mount Mike of the Avas, he sat quietly and he saw before him his wife and his son and the yard of his father's farm, and he felt the sunshine hovering about it, and he saw the well and the little brook—

The Russian officer went into the tent and brought out his tunic and pointed to the collar of the tunic, with a friendly grin on his face.

The Russian officer had sewn the badges of a cornet on his collar. There were only the narrow gold stripe and one star on his collar now. The Russian officer had promoted him.

He had to be grateful for the promotion, he had to act as if he had liked it. Of course, the Russian officer was drunk —otherwise he would not have played such a joke on him. The *szilvorium* was too strong for him. But what could he do?

He was impatiently waiting to be sent away. He wanted to get away from this drunken fool. Who could tell what he would do next? He had heard that some men liked to play practical jokes when they were drunk, and such a sot here, who could tell, in the end he might even—

They were taken away, to a house. There were scores of prisoners about, he did not know one of them, they all belonged to other regiments. They must have been all captured to-day. They sat silently on the ground and stared grimly, darkly ahead of them. He tried to find an officer, but there were only a few N.C.O.'s there: a couple of corporals, a sergeant or two.

At last he was brought before a Russian officer of high rank who sat at a small table beneath a tree. The table was covered with a white cloth. An interpreter was called in who put to him questions in German. They asked his name, and his job, the number of his regiment, the names of his superiors. They did not care about the others, they questioned only him. They asked him to tell them precisely where he had been captured. They put a map in front of him, he had to point out the place where he had been taken prisoner. He had used the same map, he pointed out the spot correctly. He even felt a slight sensation of interest when he moved his finger along the corduroy road, yes, here it had happened, here he had come, here, yes, this morning—

The interpreter, who spoke very bad German, told him that that was all and that he might sit down anywhere he pleased. If they needed him again they would call him.

He sat down beneath a big tree and leaned his head against its trunk. He was very tired. It was growing dark, and he had been on his feet for practically two days. The interpreter came up to him and engaged him in conversation. The interpreter lied at first, he claimed to have been in Budapest for years, as a hotel-porter, he said he had learned his German there. He said that he had been a spy and that no one had noticed it, he had been very cunning and shrewd, no one in Budapest had suspected anything. The interpreter's obvious and stupid lies maddened him. How could he have been in Budapest when he did not understand one word of Hungarian? He asked the interpreter what hotel was opposite the *Café New York*—if he had been in Budapest for years, he should have known it. The interpreter was embarrassed and kept silent. Then he said he remembered it, wasn't it the *Hotel Vienna*? No, it was not.

Then the interpreter turned the conversation into another channel. He said this was, thank God, the final victory, Brussilov had dealt a death-blow to the entire Austro-Hungarian army, the war was over, now there would be only a few insignificant skirmishes with the Turks, but the Central Powers were beaten already; Brussilov had beaten them to rags to-day—

He began to argue with him. He asked sarcastically whether he thought that we did not know anything about the fall of Kut-el-Amara?

The interpreter frowned and asked what had fallen?

"Kut-el-Amara. *Die Russen kampfen umsonst.*"

The interpreter laughed, and said he did not think that that Kut-el-Amara business was true. But it was evident that he had never been in Budapest, nor did he know anything about Kut-el-Amara.

The interpreter did not like the Kut-el-Amara theme. He began to talk about something else. He said he would be well treated, he did not need to be afraid. Russia treated all prisoners very well, although Germany did not deserve such treatment. All prisoners have a good time here, he said, especially the officers. The officers are regularly paid fifty roubles a month. It's more than enough. It's a good thing for him that he is an officer already. His stripe is brand new, it shows that he hasn't been an officer for long.

"Do you know our badges?"

Of course. A soldier with a white bone star on his collar is not an officer. With a yellow stripe and three stars, not an officer either. Gold stripe, yellow stripe and three stars, doubtful. This question is just being settled in Moscow, but, for the time being, it hasn't been decided yet whether such soldiers will be treated as officers or not. But a gold stripe with one star is an officer. They consider him an officer, he is entitled to the fifty roubles and he does not have to work.

His heart began to beat faster. So the Russian officer had not been drunk when he had promoted him.

He had merely paid for the *szilvorium.*

He had promoted him so that there should be no argument

over him, that he should get the monthly fifty roubles, that he should not have to work—

The interpreter was called away, but he came back in a few minutes and told him in a hoarse voice that something terrible had happened, a court-martial was sitting in the house, he was to go in.

He was taken to the house, where a great number of Russian officers were sitting at a hurriedly put together table shaped like a horseshoe. He was led before the presiding officer and the interpreter told him that abominable things had happened; he would have to account for them, because he was the only officer among the prisoners in this sector.

They shoved a bullet under his nose and sarcastically asked him whether he had ever seen it? Whether he had known that his soldiers had used such bullets? They said, however, that his fate would be the same even if he had not known it.

They handed him the bullet. He looked at it, examined it.

"What's the matter with this bullet?"

"The colonel wishes to know why the steel covering is rasped off? This was not done in the factory, it was done by the troops, at the command of their inhuman and bloodthirsty officers. How did they dare to shoot with dumdum bullets? when international agreements expressly forbid their use."

He had heard already that such rasped-off bullets caused frightful wounds. But he heard the word dumdum for the first time now. Nor had he ever seen such a bullet before.

The Russian colonel was shouting at him. He asked him: Is this chivalry; is this Christianity? There's nothing you can bring up in your defence; such bullets were used because the officers ordered them. Now you will pay for your bestiality.

They took him out again, but now he was guarded by two privates with fixed bayonets. The interpreter was also infuriated. He came out after him, for neither was permitted to be present while the court-martial deliberated. He said that he would never have thought that they were capable of such barbarity. Abominable.

The presiding officer sent for him.

The colonel asked him again whether they were regularly using these brutal bullets, whether they were being made by order of the higher command? He could, perhaps, change his fate yet. If he confessed everything, he might escape the utterly humiliating fate, for an officer, of the gallows. In that case he would be, as befitted an officer, put before a firing squad.

He answered that this was the first time he had ever seen a dumdum bullet, he had never known what it was like, he had never known how they were made, he had thought that only those bullets were called dumdums which exploded; he had never heard of such an order. He requested permission to ask the soldiers about it, permission to speak a few words to them.

He was taken out again. He looked round. Dull and leaden fatigue pervaded him. The big tree where he would be hung rose hideously before him; with his soul, he was taking leave of the little brook in which his little son was splashing about now, and wearily he began to speak:

"Men, I'm going to be hanged now because they've found on one of you a rasped-off bullet. They don't know and I don't know to whom that bullet belonged, but they are going to hang me just the same. Don't tell me who the man was who owned that bullet, it makes no difference any more; at the most they will hang him next to me—But who, in God's name, told you to rasp off the bullet?"

One of the soldiers lazily rose. He saluted and reported:

"I beg to report, sir, that bullet was mine—"

"Why the hell do you say so, you unfortunate fool; I asked you not to—?"

"Why shouldn't I say so? I rasped it off myself. It comes out of the case more easily. I took the powder out and the upper part of the bullet is fixed up as a whistle; that's why it's rasped off. I made it myself, it's a fine whistle—"

Hope was returning to him; he went back to the court-martial and asked for the bullet.

He took the bullet out of its copper case, turned it, blew into it, and the tiny whistle shrilly and triumphantly echoed

in the little room the returning hopes of his miserable and fast disappearing little life.

The colonel smiled and suddenly understood everything. He realized that it was not bestiality, merely a toy. He stepped to him and patted him on the shoulder. He even shook hands with him.

The colonel said that he was falsely and erroneously accused of a crime. As a compensation, he might sleep in the room to-night, if he wanted to, and not in the garden.

CHAPTER XXIII

WHEN the Russian colonel told him that he might sleep in the house, all the excitement and all the fatigue of two days and a night descended upon him at once. Infinite weariness closed his eyelids, and by the time he had stretched himself out on the floor, he was already fast asleep. He awoke with a start; some one was mercilessly shaking him. He thought he had been lying thus collapsed for a few minutes only, but he must have been sleeping a long time, for it was morning now and the sun shone brightly.

He was ordered to leave the room.

The open field swarmed with prisoners. With an immense number of prisoners. There were officers among them now, and yesterday's lethargy was supplanted by a strange liveliness. Russian N.C.O.'s were searching the prisoners. They took the cameras away from the officers, tore up their papers and the pink field post-cards they found in the pockets of the ranks. But the Russians could not search all of them; there were too many. It was a haphazard examination.

They then had to take off their boots and the Russians felt inside them, they had to unbutton their tunics and the Russians searched under their shirts. A Russian soldier ordered him to open his mouth. Meekly he obeyed and the Russian thrust his filthy fist into his mouth and he felt the touch of the cold and dirty fingers on his tongue. The Russian tried to break the gold crown of one of his teeth off, but then he began to yell at the top of his voice. The Russian soldier ran

away, and officers arrived who put an end to the looting and searching. But by that time, something had been taken away from practically every one of them.

Food, blankets, safety-razors and the little bags which hung round their necks and in which they kept their money under their shirts.

The Russian officers ordered mounted Cossacks to mount guard over them, and the Cossacks surrounded them with their seven-foot lances and herded them together. He lost the three men with whom he had been captured; he was now in the midst of strangers. They set off, in huge masses, intimidated and stumbling at every step, driven on by the yells, the lances and the knouts of the Cossacks.

He had only one wish: he would have liked to get to the outer edge of the marching masses. There he would not tread on any one's heel, there no one would tread on his heels, there he would not be suffocated with the foul stench of the mob. But those at the edge held on to their positions and those inside would not let him go. A second lieutenant was somehow swept next to him; one of his eyes was bandaged, the other one half closed. He tried hard to keep it open but could not. My name is Lányi, let me lean on you, I am half blinded, said the second lieutenant, and took him by the arm and leaned on him. The masses just marched on, no one knew where; no one knew either the country, or the road, or their destination. Painfully he staggered along with the second lieutenant on his arm; he could hardly drag himself and now there was this second lieutenant too. He remembered he had been taught at school, about Samaritans, but when one read of them sitting on a school-bench, or at home in bed, one merely smiled, deprecatingly. What of it, to help a wounded comrade? It's a duty, and something of an effort, one said, and waved it aside.

That was just what he was doing now, and how insufferable it was, what an incredible effort. It was maddening, the fatigue was driving him insane, he could hardly drag his blind comrade any longer, he thought that they would both collapse in a second, and then they would be trampled to death by those who came behind them.

The colossal weight of the second lieutenant hung on his arm and on his chest and on his shoulders, the silent second lieutenant pulled him down. He tried to get to the side, at least, to get air, to have just a little more elbow-room to drag him along: but they roughly pushed him back and cursed him; don't shove, don't kick, stay where you are.

Sweat and stench of perspiration and suffocating stink whirled about them. There spread the infinite Sarmatian steppes. Yet all the choking, foul odour settled on this narrow strip of a road where the prisoners marched.

They marched and their throats became dry: they marched and they put their feet mechanically one before the other: they marched and the road had nowhere an end. They marched, and little pools of water glistened in the sun, and thirst tormented them. He had never known this either: what it meant to be thirsty, as it was described in novels and in the Bible; to be thirsty, he had never known that sensation. All feeling of nausea, all feeling of fastidiousness disappeared, the men looked longingly and covetously at the pools covered with weed; they imagined that they would be instantaneously transported to heaven if only they could drink of them.

It was noon. The Cossacks stopped the column.

An interpreter announced that those who drank out of the ruts or puddles would be immediately shot to death. This water spread typhus.

They squatted and knelt and sat in the dust, and stared longingly and covetously at the water in the ruts and the mossy pools.

He told Lányi that he had chocolate in his bag, and suggested to him that they should eat some.

Lányi covered his mouth with his palm, and whispered back to him to keep silent.

"There are others who also have food. There are even some who have water in their flasks. Can't you see that no one touches his bag? They are all afraid of the others—"

There he sat, on the road to Kiev, and there was chocolate in his bag, but he dared not take it out because of the other starving men. The Samaritan dared not take the chocolate

out of his bag because there were other hungry men around him. And there were some who had water in their flasks, and they dared not drink it, either.

There they sat, quivering and shivering with hunger, and looking squarely in each other's eyes, and watching jealously and anxiously each other's every gesture, and no one dared touch his food, his drink; they dared not drink nor eat for fear of each other. The man who showed that he had a bite of bread would have been torn to pieces on the spot. There they sat, and not even the sick men, the men suffering from fever, could have a gulp of water. Those who still had something sat indifferently, they would not betray even with their eyes that they had something. There they sat and hated each other with deadly hatred. They would have liked to run off to distant forests, to hide there in order to gobble up their chocolate undisturbed, greedily, with saliva oozing out of their mouths. They stared at each other with protruding eyes, and the hidden food and the hidden flask of water burned them like lit fuses.

When they rose, they were more tired than they had been before the rest. But they marched on mechanically and shattered. The colossal weight of Second Lieutenant Lányi pulled him down with incredible force. He felt as if his right side where Lányi hung on to him had been torn out of his body.

"Please, comrade, come round to my left side, let's change places."

After many efforts and experiments Lányi managed to come to his left, but after a few minutes of relief, he felt the weight even more than before. Now he would have liked to have Lányi back in the original position, for there his side was already wholly numb, but this would have been a very daring and very dangerous experiment.

He had to go on, because those behind him trod on his heels and his ankles with their spiked boots, whenever he fell out of step, whenever he slowed down even for a second.

When they saw a village from afar, their hopes rose, they thought it was their goal. They dragged themselves on and they reached the village, and then they left the village again,

the few miserable houses and the small church with its garlic-shaped roof. And they marched on with burnt-out hopes. In every tree, in every hovel they saw the castle of their hopes, they approached deserted barns as if they had been sacred walls.

The silent, wordless march went on for ever, with the mercilessness and certainty of the grave.

Late in the afternoon, in the desperate struggle of the march, he turned to Lányi:

"What happened to your eyes?"

"They beat me."

"Who did? When?"

"When they got my machine gun. They are infuriated with machine-gunners."

"They've got machine guns themselves. Why should they complain of ours?"

"Makes no difference. They are furious with them. Krisztinkovich—Did you know Krisztinkovich?"

"No, I didn't."

"Well, Krisztinkovich was with me, and it was lucky for me that he went on moving after they shot him. Krisztinkovich was still moving, and the Russian was wild with rage and he emptied all the chambers of his revolver into him. He shot at him until he had no more cartridges left, and then he came after me, and, that was lucky, because he had no time to load again, so he just began hammering me with the butt of his unloaded revolver. He beat me until I collapsed. I can't remember what happened next, the Russians took me back. It was lucky for me that Krisztinkovich was still moving. And I am lucky not to be blinded. I think I won't lose my eyesight. I can already see with one eye. How did they get you?"

"They just did—Wasn't very interesting—"

"Were you in the fox-holes?"

"No."

"Because most of them were just herded together in the fox-holes. What an asinine idea that was! Although, if there hadn't been any fox-holes—But—We don't know what we should have done—Who knows how we should have done it—"

Evening came, and in the distance shone fixed and definite lights. The news spread that there the march would end. They marched now with renewed hope and strength. They marched towards the little dots of light, but hour after hour passed and yet they came no nearer to them.

The distant lights were still far away. Hour after hour passed, and suddenly, when they least expected it, they were there. There were electric lights. They hung over the door of a large log house.

Those who knew Russian passed down the order. There were Russian officers in the log house. The prisoners were forbidden to enter it. They were to sleep in the open. The exhausted men sat down where they stood. They sat down on the wet grass and leaned against each other.

As if they had been mowed down, they spread out on the field.

He saw a dark silhouette at the edge of the human field. He thought it was an abandoned wagon. Anything—if only it could serve as a bed.

He went nearer to it and he saw that it was an oven, half collapsed. Its mouth was intact and part of its roof, too. He bent down and thrust his hand into it. There were ashes still in it.

He called Lányi and shared with him the half-collapsed oven.

They climbed into the oven and stretched themselves out in the divine ashes.

CHAPTER XXIV

IN the morning, when the delight of sleep had gone and they crawled out of the oven, they looked at each other with nausea. They were filthy, disgusting, and hungry. It was a humiliating sensation rather than a disgusting one.

"I don't know how it is," said Lányi, "but it seems to me we ought to feel proud now. We've suffered for the good of the country, and if we are hungry now it is not because of ourselves, and if we are as filthy as swine it is not because of

ourselves. I slept in the ashes in the interest of higher ideals, and my face is smoky and bloody in the interest of a sublime goal. And yet—all this—this wallowing—it is as if we were outlawed—excommunicated—"

They shook out their clothes and stood, all naked, without any feeling of shame, among all those thousands of men. They tried to cleanse themselves. Hundreds of others also stood all naked and also shook their shirts, their clothes. When they put them on again, the coolness of the shirt, of the tunic, brought back to them the fugitive illusion of cleanness. As if the stuffiness of the clothes and of the shirts had gone.

More columns of prisoners were arriving, and, by noon, many thousands of them filled the field. Nobody paid any attention to them. Russian officers with shiny shoulder-straps hurried in and out of the log house. Cossack squadrons galloped round the field, and the prisoners were not permitted to pass outside the chain of the Cossack guards.

They gazed longingly at an old wagon standing peacefully on the highway. A small Russian boy was lying in it, drowsily swinging his whip, chasing away flies.

An aeroplane or two whirred in the air, beneath the snow-white cloud-masses, and geese grazed at the edge of a distant village.

"Russian geese—"

Towards noon, the Cossacks began to shout again. They again herded them together with their long lances and then set them in motion again. Lányi estimated that there were ten thousand of them there.

"I wonder what the official *communiqués* at home will say—"

After about ten minutes, they came to a railway line.

"Look," said Lányi, "the track's wider than ours, look—"

Well, yes, it is wider. Although, if one is not an expert, if one knows nothing about gauges, one can hardly notice that it is wider. Here, too, there are shrubs along the line, and telegraph poles, too, Clothes are hung out to dry in the gardens, and they don't seem to be cut in a different way. There are little shops in the villages, just as at home, only these

people here don't advertise Franck Coffee. Mauthner sells no seeds here, although seeds are sold just the same; there are little shelves in the shops here, too, and the streets are full of dirty-faced boys, and the women are just as curious, they all rush to the fences as they march by, to stare at them.

And the leaves of the willow-trees are just as narrow here as they are at home, and the grass is just as cool and green—

They boarded a train. It was said that they would travel a few hours only and then reach their destination. But no one knew what the destination was. Nor were there any explanations. Lányi told him he had made the acquaintance of a certain Szivacsek who spoke Russian; they'd better watch him and not lose sight of him.

"Where did Szivacsek learn Russian?"

"He comes from North Hungary, I think, from Nyitra."

"And they speak Russian up there?"

"No, they speak Slovak, but that's very much like Russian."

Interesting, he had never known that Slovak was like Russian. Oh, yes, of course, they were both Slav, why, of course. It's lucky to have Szivacsek at hand!

Szivacsek got into the same wagon and promised to stay with them. Szivacsek had a silver medal for bravery, first class, on his chest, and now he envied him even more. It was not enough that Szivacsek understood Russian, he even had a first-class silver medal. He had also been recommended for the second-class medal as well, but he would never get it now.

Lányi was explaining to Szivacsek how he had been captured, and about the machine-gun and the revolver, and all his story. Yesterday his face had been all swollen and he could hardly see, now it was much better. Lányi said that he would draw up a deposition and asked the two of them to sign it, testifying that when they had first met him his face had still been swollen and that he could not see—Szivacsek did not need to worry about the truth of his statement, the marks of the beating were still on his face, although he could see quite well now—

Szivacsek nodded gravely in agreement, but he could not

understand what Lányi was driving at. He asked the two others what use the deposition would be.

Lányi explained to him that when they eventually returned home everybody would have to prove that he had not been cowardly, and that was why he needed the deposition. Furthermore, he hoped that he would get the *Signum Laudis*, at least that, and that they would send the medal after him, to Russia. He had deserved it. Of course, he expected to have it sent to him in Russia only if they were not to return soon. But he needed the deposition in any case. And the signatures of two officers. He believed that the signatures of two officers were enough to make the document authentic.

"Let me put down your names, regiments and ranks—"

Lányi took out a note-book and suddenly he felt his heart sink. The train was approaching Kiev, many-towered churches appeared on the horizon. Russian soldiers loitered at the level-crossings and gazed at them with wide-open eyes, a soldier with fixed bayonet stood in the doorway, the truck was racing with them to an unknown destiny, and yet he felt his heart sink just because Lányi asked his rank. What would happen now? Which of his ranks should he tell them? The one he had received from the Russian officer? A fine sort of exoneration that would be—

"My rank—I don't quite—it didn't arrive—"

"That's all right, as long as it was mentioned in the orders of the day—"

"It wasn't—"

"Then I don't understand it—What were you in your battalion?"

He could not explain it now, especially not with Szivacsek there. Reluctantly and hesitatingly, he stammered it out:

"Cornet."

Lányi told them that he would have the deposition ready in Kiev and then they would sign it.

They saw a wide river and on the farther bank of the river, on a slope, a beautiful city.

Kiev—Kiev—The Battle of Kiev—

It began to hum, to echo within him, an old, faint melody, of long-forgotten books, etchings, of Kiev, of Kiev—

But the train turned away from Kiev, it did not go into the city. It stopped near a huge pine-forest. Near an immense camp, which swarmed already with a similarly torn and battered army of prisoners.

"That's Darnitza—"

This information was also imparted by Szivacsek. They would remain here for a few days, they would be distributed from here. From here, they would go to their final destination. That was what Szivacsek said.

There were a few brick buildings in the camp, for the officers. The privates were sent to wooden huts.

He loitered aimlessly among the pines of Darnitza. The forest looked like a fair ground in the slums: noise and shouts, and men lying on the grass, and dirt beneath the beautiful trees, and filthy men.

The wooden barrack-huts were half buried in the ground. He went into one. Three rows of shelves against the walls. The men slept on them. But there was not enough room for all of them, and they had to lie close to each other. Like cigars in a box. That was where they slept, and those who came late had no place to sleep at all. They had to sleep in the open. Though there were many who voluntarily went out to sleep in the open, despite the fact that they had places inside, so unbearable was the air in the barracks sunk into the ground. And then again, it was comparatively healthy to sleep out there, in the sand; there were no bugs out there, no disease.

There was a large crowd in front of one of the barracks. Two smooth-shaven men were busy before a small kitchen stove. Hundreds of men crowded round the fire and tried to shove each other out of the way. He was told that two actor-fellows were running a sort of restaurant there, they cooked meat and pancakes and sold them to the prisoners.

"Who are they? Russians?"

"Oh, no. Actors from Budapest. Don't you know them? That's Sárossy, from the *Király* Theatre—from Budapest."

Near Kiev, in a pine forest called Darnitza, a Mr. Sárossy, from the *Király*, was sweating before a kitchen stove, frying pancakes, exhibiting tricks.

He threw the cakes up in the air and then neatly caught them in the pan. That was how he turned them over. Around him grinned the shipwrecks of the Battle of Lutsk, and the syren of a river-boat, floating on the Dnieper, was heard from afar.

A sham cornet, whose promotion had not been mentioned in the orders of the day, was standing close to a worried second lieutenant who was not sure of his exoneration; and electric bulbs were loudly announcing the latest news in the huge show-window next to the *Café New York;* and some one in the Avas was hurrying to the station to catch the last train; and a little reporter was running over to Buda to find out all about a chimney-fire; and a general with brilliant shoulder-straps was suggesting that the immense masses of prisoners should be exhibited to the populace of Moscow on the Tverskaya; and an innkeeper near Verdun was buying a stolen cow; and a man in Alsace was refusing to buy German war bonds: and the latest fashion was already on display in Petöfi Street; and an aeroplane was being shot down above Kol-Malin; and a Russian gunner had found some papers at the edge of the Swamp of Rokitno; and somewhere a major said: I believe my rheumatism is getting better; and a colonel telephoned: Hold out to the last man; and Lieutenant Beregi let fly at a sergeant because the sergeant talked back; and unlucky fathers ecstatically watched Mr. Sárossy tossing pancakes near Kiev.

CHAPTER XXV

HE strolled back to the brick building, to the officers' quarters. Here, too: confusion and making of acquaintances and crowds and cleansing and tea. But there was also an attentive group round a colonel. There was no order as yet, they mixed freely and without discrimination, but the officers of high rank had already their following. The others spoke in low tones there, they listened carefully to the speakers. They shot reproachful glances at a black-haired cornet who cursed because he could not get any warm water.

He cautiously stole nearer to the group, and, standing on his toes, watched what was going on.

There were low, wide wooden benches along the walls. A colonel was sitting there, lecturing to the group around him. He said that the Czechs could not be blamed for everything. Nobody could conscientiously claim that the front had been broken through just because the Czechs had surrendered on the flank. True, hundreds of thousands had been captured, but the reason for this was the exaggerated humanitarianism of the Highest Command. They had wanted to protect and to save the troops, that was why they had ordered the fox-holes to be built, and when the Russians had charged everybody had been in the fox-holes. The colonel said that he did not wish to criticize the Highest Command, but, nevertheless, this exaggerated solicitude had reacted unfavourably. He himself had been out inspecting the front-line trenches when the barrage had begun and, since he could not have returned, he had stayed in the fox-holes. He had been captured just like the others; the Russians had sent a man down the fox-holes with a white handkerchief in his hand, who had informed them that they had been captured. They had not surrendered themselves, but they could not have resisted because there had been a Russian machine-gun trained on them. In military terms, this had not been a capitulation, they had merely abandoned useless resistance. He would draw up his deposition accordingly, said the colonel. He would submit a report of his experiences to the General Staff, after his return home, of course, and he would take a strong position against the use of these fox-holes. "It is comforting to know," concluded the colonel, "that these great masses of prisoners are not the result of a defeat. It would be a sad business indeed, if the Russians had been able to disarm so many of our soldiers at once. But they withdrew from our soldiers the possibility of resistance. Consequently, the fault lies not in our unwillingness to fight, for, it if were so, the future would indeed be dark. It was merely a tactical error which could be easily remedied—"

The colonel always emphasized the phrase, "they withdrew the possibility of resistance from us." It was clear that

he was very proud of the formula which he himself had invented; he repeated it several times, with great gusto. He must have thought that history would record the name of the colonel who first used that expression.

The colonel now remarked that he would like to rest, whereupon all the other officers stiffened to attention. Those who wore caps saluted, those who were bareheaded bowed, but all left him immediately. Now the colonel said: "Pardon me, gentlemen, pardon me, one more second—"

All came back and respectfully waited for him to speak. The colonel said, "Gentlemen, my orderly officer has disappeared, and I am in need of an officer to take his place. But I must make it clear to you that if he turns up again he will relieve whoever takes on the job now. Perhaps Lieutenant Pépey—"

Lieutenant Pépey stepped forward. He was obviously pleased that the colonel had selected him. Immediately he stepped to the colonel's side, who continued to talk, and said that since, to the best of his knowledge, he was the senior officer in the camp, he would take over the command. Lieutenant Pépey will look round and ascertain whether this is true, and if there is some one of a higher rank, he will report it immediately. To-morrow afternoon at two o'clock there will be an officers' meeting on the clearing just beyond the last barrack to the east; he will have to issue several orders, lay down regulations. And now, good night, gentlemen. Lieutenant Pépey will, of course, have to pick an orderly for himself.

They saluted again, then they were dismissed. He sauntered round the various rooms. All were full of officers. Most of them were cornets. In one of the rooms he surprised a number of aspirants sewing the badges of cornets on to their collars. Here was the cornet-factory. All of them knew already that aspirants would get no fifty roubles, would not be detailed to an officers' camp, would have to work. Amazing, how quickly the information spread. He felt like an old, veteran cornet among them, he was a senior cornet, he was above them in the active list, he had been a cornet since yesterday.

And where had they picked up so quickly all these tin teacups, where the sugar, where the hot water? How quickly they settled down, how much at home they already felt! He remembered his chocolate. He broke off a piece and offered it to an unknown second lieutenant. They introduced themselves to each other and he got a cup of tea. "But you will have to get the sugar yourself," said the second lieutenant, smiling. No, I never put sugar in my tea, only at home. They had to laugh now; that was regarded as a joke. They laughed and he drank his tea, without sugar. It was very good, he was thirsty. The second lieutenant remarked that there was room for him on his shelf and asked him to stay there. Lie down, if you are sleepy. He was sleepy, but he could not sleep; and more faces came into the room. He knew already that he would sleep here, next to the Austrian second lieutenant; he saw already that the "cigar system" was in use here, too, they would have to sleep next to each other on the shelves. But he did not want to fall asleep as yet. He was looking for acquaintances among the men who came into the room. He had lost Lányi, and Szivacsek, too, and now here was this Austrian second lieutenant, a namesake of a well-known German writer: Stefan Zweig. Well, if he isn't in captivity now, he will be most probably writing a critique. Scandalous, how dares such a female call herself an actress? Or is that Stefan Zweig not a dramatic critic?

Well, and who now, instead of himself was smoking a cigar in front of Hangli's? Who was now, in his stead, criticizing Porzsolt's column, who was reading the pleasant pages of the *Pesti Futar?* He wondered whether his substitute enjoyed it as much as he would, whether his substitute knew how to order correctly the coffee at the *Café New York*, whether he gazed at the shop-windows for him, whether he was anxious for his job. Because, as a matter of fact, that went with liberty and freedom. If there was justice in the world, his substitute would have to worry now about unemployment—

In his dream, on the shelf, he was talking to his wife: "Dear, I couldn't tell you everything, but, as you see, everything's turned out all right; you see, I've attended to it very

well. How is sonny?"

He received no reply because he was awakened, and he saw Russian soldiers in the room, with flashlights.

The interpreter announced that a few officers would have to come with them. A committee was to question them. He looked at his watch, it was past midnight, the whole building was asleep, and, damn it, couldn't they have thought of it before? What did they want? And why did they pick him?

They picked him because the Russians picked them out at random. But if he did not want to go, he could stay, they said, they would then take some one else.

The others woke up too, and some of them said: Don't go unless you are forced to: who knows what they are after, what military secrets they want to get out of you?

In that case, he said, it would be best if he went, because he knew no military secrets at all.

But, his comrades said, he would first have to get permission from his superior officer; it would be best to ask the colonel about it, to find out what his opinion was, or rather what his orders were.

He would report the matter to him afterwards, he told them. He rose, and left the room surrounded by Russian soldiers with fixed bayonets. They took him downstairs to a brightly lit room on the ground floor.

Crimson-collared, beribboned, bearded Russian generals with gilt shoulder-straps—they must be generals at least!—were sitting behind a long table. Huge chandeliers hung from the ceiling, and the uniforms, the epaulets, the medals on their chests, shone brilliantly in the glaring light.

A Turgeniev novel floated silently towards him, the characters of Tolstoy's "Anna Karenina" rose dimly in the distance, from Dostoievsky the soldier Karamazov's hazy figure appeared before his eyes, and Pushkin sang from above—

If he could only step before them and open his heart to them and say:

"Have you any idea, most honoured sirs, how deeply I love the Russian soil?—General Pavel Pavlovitch, I know Turgeniev, I know Gogol, I know Lermontov, Gorky is a

good friend of mine, and Sonia, who accompanied the murderer to Siberia, will be my inseparable sister forever—I hope gentlemen—" And then he would bow low and bend his knee in token of his respect and admiration, and the Russian officers would leap to their feet and embrace him, and the presiding general would kiss him, just as it so often happened in Russian novels—He would speak of Chekhov, he would speak of Oblomov. He would lay before them his overwhelmed and happily bleeding heart—

"So you are willing to give us information concerning certain military questions?" asked the interpreter.

He had never in his life been awakened from a beautiful dream more rudely.

"No—no—of course not," he stammered. "I am an officer, my oath binds me—But—but—how could I express it—I am a great admirer of Russian literature—"

"Is that all you want to say?"

"No—as a matter of fact—I don't want—anything—not even that—All this is like a Dostoievsky novel—like a book by Tolstoy—"

The interpreter beckoned to a guard who, with fixed bayonet, took him back to his place on the shelf, next to Stefan Zweig, who was already loudly snoring.

CHAPTER XXVI

THERE was no officers' meeting the next afternoon. New trains had arrived in the morning and, towards noon, the news spread that the log houses as well as the brick building were crowded to overflowing. A train was to start in the afternoon, for Moscow.

Moscow, Holy City of all the Russias.

It was comforting to tie, with this slender rope of a sentence, the storm-ridden canoe of one's life to pleasant old memories—Even though it was nothing but a sentence—

"Ah, Mr. Cornet!"

Captain Kenéz was standing before him, the same captain

to whom he had been unable to deliver the fresh rolls and the salami, because of unforeseen and distracting circumstances.

The captain looked at him very severely and it was evident that his "Mr. Cornet" had been meant sarcastically.

His momentary joy froze on his face and, involuntarily, he clicked his heels together.

"Well!" said the captain. "Don't go away. Stay here. Lieutenant Hoffmann, my orderly officer, will be here presently and then he will act as your escort."

They waited for Lieutenant Hoffmann. When he arrived, he stepped up to him, saluted in the most correct fashion, and said:

"I am commanded to place the aspirant under arrest."

The reservist Lieutenant Hoffmann apparently did not say the formula according to Regulations, for Captain Kenéz shook his head disapprovingly and remarked:

"Come, come, lieutenant—"

They set off, he with Lieutenant Hoffmann, Captain Kenéz a few steps ahead of them. The captain looked into every room. But they did not stop in any of them. He even looked into the washroom. But he did not go in. It seemed that he was looking for a quieter place, where no one would disturb them. They left the building, walked through the woods, past the log houses, and at last came to a halt beneath a huge pine.

Lieutenant Hoffmann stepped up to the captain and according to the ritual, reported his prisoner present. Both he and Lieutenant Hoffmann saluted, and Captain Kenéz returned their salute. Then the "trial" began.

A few steps from them, a ragged and desperate army of miserables, above them, twittering birds. From the Dnieper came again the tooting of the river-boat's horn, from the direction of Sárossy's barrack floated the smells of melted butter and roasted meat. His feet were swollen into his shoes, his shirt was sticky with a week's filth, his eyes bloodshot, but he stood there rigidly, stiffened into attention with a bread-bag dangling at his side, and the "trial" began:

"First of all, who authorised you to wear the badges of a cornet?"

"A Russian officer, but I don't know his name. And others have badges sewed on too: everybody has promoted himself, even some of the volunteers—"

"Nobody in my battalion may sew them on without my permission. I alone may give authority in the hope of future confirmation of such promotions. But we will talk about that later. What's happened to the mess-money?"

"What mess-money?"

"The aspirant was in charge of the mess. The aspirant went to Budapest to buy supplies. How much was left over?"

"I beg to report, captain, that I spent almost all of the money. I rendered a full account of the money expended, and I gave what was left to the quartermaster—"

A dreamy look came into the captain's eyes. He stared into the distance, as if he had suddenly discovered the futility of everything, as if the war itself had lost all its significance to him. Then he waved the little cane he had in his hand.

"Dismissed, Lieutenant Hoffmann. You'd better learn a little soldierly bearing and behaviour in captivity—You're dismissed too, cornet—It was damned silly of you to give that money back to the quartermaster; there would have been plenty of time to do it after the war—"

The captain stood there sadly broken and suddenly aged; it was as if he had collapsed. He pitied him.

He stepped nearer to him.

"If you please, captain," he said in a lax, incorrect, civilian manner, "if you will allow me—"

"What is it, cornet?"

"You want money, don't you?"

"Certainly I do. I thought you had some of the mess-money still with you. I should have taken upon myself the responsibility of delivering it to the proper authorities—But if there isn't any—"

"There is no mess-money. But I had been paid just before I was captured. I can give you some. Can you use it here?"

"Thanks ever so much, my boy. Certainly I can use it. You do me a great favour. I'll write to my family to send the money to yours. Can you give me a hundred *kronen?*"

"With pleasure. I can give you two hundred, if you want it. I have seven."

"Why, you're a millionaire! But I don't need more than a hundred. I don't want to burden my family unnecessarily. So we've made peace. But why didn't you report your promotion to me?"

"May I wear my badges?"

"Why, certainly. As far as I am concerned you may wear anything you please—"

He took out one hundred *kronen* from the little linen bag which hung round his neck under his shirt, and gave it to the captain. Then he dictated to him his wife's address, to which the captain's wife should send the hundred *kronen*.

They were engrossed in a friendly conversation when he suddenly noticed Lieutenant Hoffmann.

"There is your orderly officer, shall I call him?"

"Let him alone," said the captain, "I don't need him any more. But I couldn't cross-examine without him. Now I have a hundred *kronen*, that'll last until we get some money from the Russians. I needed a coat very badly, and a blanket."

"Why, can you buy coats here? and blankets? I need them too."

"Come with me."

He had not seen any coat and blanket shops, although he was familiar with every nook and corner of the camp. The captain took him to one of the log houses.

"We need coats and blankets," he said to the infantrymen who were there.

A hundred of them ran to their places, picked up their coats and blankets, and raced back to them. They outyelled each other:

"Mine is brand-new, sir, mine is black, sir—"

They selected two coats and two blankets and the captain began to bargain, for him, too. Each paid ten *kronen* for both the blanket and the coat.

He held fast to the treasure and enjoyed his sleep in advance; there would be no more safety-razor pillows, no more chocolate pillows for him. He would not be shivering any more, the cold would not wake him up at dawn.

"How is it, captain, that the men have two coats and two blankets?"

"Why should they have two?"

"Well, if they sell one of them!"

"They have only one, or none at all. Those who have any sell them. They will get others in Penza, or in Moscow, from the Red Cross."

"And what'll they do until that?"

"Just what you did, and I did."

Of course! The blanket quivered under his arm. So—he took it away, by right of money.

"Do they need the money so badly?"

"What d'you think?"

"What did you have for dinner last night? And what for lunch to-day?"

"Chocolate. I've been eating chocolate since they captured me. I had a few tablets with me. Funny. I notice it only now that I've been living on chocolate for days. Yes—"

"You see! Do you think every one had chocolate? Give me a bite."

He took the last tablet out of his bread-bag and gave the captain half of it. The captain raised it to his watering mouth with trembling hands.

"I was just going to buy something for myself. But this is much better. There's nothing better than chocolate."

"Tell me, captain, are you sure they'll get coats in Moscow?"

"Well, if there are any they will."

"And how far is Moscow from here?"

"Well, it's quicker by express. If we are put on a goods train, two weeks. Or four—"

Two weeks, or four—And blankets only if there should be any—

"I am sorry that I've taken the blanket from that man. Although there are many who lose their lives—"

"So you too have discovered that—What else do you expect? This is war. And it's only for a couple of days. Incidentally, blankets and coats will be dearer to-morrow—if there are any at all—"

"What do you mean, dearer?"

"Yes. We'll get food to-morrow. I heard it just now. Here, and on the train also. It's all settled. If you had waited another day, you'd have paid a lot for the blanket."

For a piece of bread! The soldier had to choose between starvation and his last blanket. He had only just been in time. Sale! Last day to-day! Splendid! He had taken advantage of the opportunity. It would be a good idea to buy blankets to-day. A sure investment. Even the contractors who delivered paper-soled boots to the Army were more honest than—No? Why, certainly! Some one had to go to the dogs. He was successful, he hadn't gone. The captain was successful, too. And the quartermaster also. Indeed, from the quartermaster's point of view, even the attack, the battle, were successful. Well, what of it! And at home they sing ballads of the soldiers!

CHAPTER XXVII

CAPTAIN KENÉZ proved to be a bad prophet. An ear-splitting noise was suddenly heard from the direction of the brick building, and at once all the prisoners made a mad rush for the building.

The news that food was being distributed spread rapidly. Not to-morrow, to-day. And at once, immediately, to everybody. A long goods train was standing on the track in front of the brick building. They were to entrain immediately after the feast. And the feast would take place to-day, not to-morrow.

It was a lucky investment, this buying of blankets. There were no blankets for sale now, there were none to be had for love or money. Those who had bought blankets speculated wisely. Blankets and coats: firm. On the Darnitza Exchange, the blanket market grew firmer. Quotations on blankets had a strong upward trend. Szacelláry was buying oats on the Budapest Exchange. Rifles and munitions also improved in Budapest. It was possible that some one had sold rifles before they reached the top price. Two infantrymen in the Forest of Darnitza sold blankets and coats too soon. They

speculated stupidly. They went bankrupt. They would not sleep to-night. In Budapest, the losers did not sleep either.

The food was brought in huge stewpots. The officers ate in the brick building.

The stewpot was put down, and an elderly Red Cross sister, with a ladle, took a position next to it. She stood there as if she wanted to invest the dealing out of the first food on Russian soil with an impressive ceremonial. As if she wanted to make a speech. As if she wanted to transfer to the captive troops of the Central Powers all rights and legal property in the stew.

The men stood, for a second, in reverential silence. Then a soldier took off his cap and greedily ladled out a capful of stew. There was no chance now for ceremonies, or sentiments, or even order. Every soldier grabbed as much as he could. One man attacked the stew with his bare hands; he collapsed a few minutes later, the boiling mess burned frightful wounds on his hands. They ate it from newspapers, towels, handkerchiefs. There was no time to hurry for the mess-tins, even when they had any. The stewpot was empty in no time. A second one was brought, but there was no way of knowing whether there would be a third one, too, or a fourth. The men shoved, kicked, and tore each other, they fought and hit each other, these comrades.

He wondered whether there was anything left in the officers' stewpot?

With chocolate in his stomach, he now began to long for a little stew. He was not hungry—not hungry—But a little stew!—Steaming, hot, stew!—

He went to the brick building and looked into the first stewpot.

The officers' pot did not contain stew. There was *laska* in it, *laska* with grated cheese. God, if this cheese is only made of sheep milk!—But how could one know how the Russians liked their *laska?* If there was a God in heaven this was made of sheep-milk; and he stepped nearer to the kettle. He did not know how he could get some for himself, he had no mess-tin or pan or anything, but he wanted to have some all the

same. A tall yager politely pushed him aside and asked him what he wanted.

"I'd like—some of the *laska*—"

The yager grimly replied that he could not have any of this. Not of this *laska*. This *laska* was reserved for staff officers only. From majors up. There were other stewpots for the junior officers. The yager advised him to repair to one of those.

He stole over to the junior officers' *laska*, cautiously eyeing those who had preceded him. He noticed that Captain Kenéz had already eaten. At last he reached a pot surrounded only by aspirants and cornets. These were noisy too, and rough, but, at least, they did not kick each other. He saluted the sister, who asked where she should put his *laska*.

He held out his blanket to her, he said, he showed, he signalled that she should just put it on the hairy blanket. The sister gave him a big ladleful.

Alas, the *laska* was sweet. It was sugared. And the cheese was just ordinary cheese. There were raisins in it. There were two raisins in the ladleful of *laska*. After chocolate, *laska* prepared with cheese made out of sheep-milk would have been much better. But it was not bad this way, either. It was fine, as a matter of fact. He immediately decided to ask his wife to make it once for him, when he got home—

A pity that he could not mop up the dish. Then he looked round. The prisoners had dispersed. The stewpots and the sisters had disappeared. But the camp still buzzed with excitement. A detachment of Russian soldiers arrived, with fixed bayonets.

A search was to take place now. After that, the train for Moscow. The prisoners were asked voluntarily to submit their revolvers, cameras, cartridges. This was their last chance. Anything found later on would bring trouble upon the owner's head. Field-glasses also.

The Russians spread out huge sheets on the ground and asked the officers to throw the requisitioned articles into them. They were not searched. The ranks were; the officers were merely requested to surrender their belongings on their word of honour. But if anything should be found on an

officer, he would be immediately deprived of his commission and degraded, for breaking his word of honour as an officer. And he would be punished, to boot.

He thought it was ridiculous to make such a request. Who had any revolvers now? or cameras?

He was mistaken. Piles of field-glasses, of revolvers, of cameras were collected. And cartridges, too.

And, at the same time, a small group near by almost decided to keep a revolver—

He had heard that officers had died for their swords. Yes, a symbol. But what did a revolver stand for? What good could one revolver do?

Late in the afternoon, they were, at last, in the goods trucks. Of course, he had been the last to go into his truck and he did not know who his fellows were, where to sit, where to stand. Then he discovered Lányi. Second Lieutenant Lányi. Quite by accident. Second Lieutenant Lányi was very happy to have found him again; he had been looking for him all day long. Because of the deposition. He was in command of the truck. Truck-commander Lányi. Szivacsek was there, too. The deposition was ready, they merely had to sign it. Lányi had made inquiries, and according to the authorities he had to sign in his old rank. The rank which the orders of the day had mentioned did not count, not until after confirmation at home. He was truck-commander, Lányi said; as a matter of fact he ought to have reported himself to him. He wouldn't do anything about it, however. Most probably he hadn't known the rule.

The truck was a cattle-truck, said Lányi, but that was all right also.

There were shelves in the truck which divided it into a lower and an upper part. Here they would sleep, lying close up to each other. Six below, six above, and on the other side also, six below, six above. That was twenty-four. Six men would be on guard and would not sleep. Thus the thirty of them would have enough room.

"Russians won't guard us?"

"Yes, they will, two Russians will come into every truck. But we must have our own guard as well, that's the order.

Anyway, everybody will have a chance to sleep, because the guard will be relieved. Every one of us will take his turn on guard."

In his "compartment," a board was missing from the shelf. When they stretched themselves out their legs hung down. The bed ended at their knees. They needed one more board. The "compartment" ought to have been lengthened.

On the track next to theirs there waited another train. That was for the ranks. Truck-commander Lányi asked the soldiers in the truck opposite theirs:

"Have you got a spare board, comrades?"

"You bet we have. But we won't give it to you."

"Why not?"

"Because after *laska* you'll be all right as you are. After stew, however, we've got to rest."

"There's no more discipline in the troops," remarked Lányi. "The way they talk back to a lieutenant—"

But they did not start yet. Something had happened. A Russian detachment went from truck to truck and looked into every one of them. They searched the trucks thoroughly. They did that because a cornet had picked an argument with a Czech soldier and had called him names. He had accused the Czechs of cowardice, he had said that the disaster could have been avoided if the Czechs had not surrendered. The Czech soldier had denounced him and now the Russians were looking for the cornet. The Czech led them. Finally the Czech gave up the search. Let him be. Later the news spread that the Czech had been afraid to come along with the prisoners and had joined the Czech Legion. By the time this news reached his truck, the train was already in motion. The prisoners' train was slowly rolling towards Moscow.

Two Russian soldiers guarded them. Both wore long beards. They seemed to be veteran soldiers, and both were very strict. They would not let the prisoners go to the door. And the truck had no windows. And it would have been so beautiful to look out at Gorky's country, at Gogol's land. He could only now and then steal a glance at the villages where the mujiks lived, the small towns where Russian noblemen visited each other in winter, the roads where troikas raced

in Russian novels, the fields where Prince Vronsky's cattle grazed, the gardens where Goncharov had dreamed once upon a time, the river on the bank of which Malva had rested—

He could not even look out while the train was in motion, the two guards locked the doors. They could gaze at Russia only when the train was at a station. Szivacsek tried to persuade the guards in Russian, but his efforts were in vain, they would not even answer him. The older one especially was very angry and severe.

He fell asleep at last. Everybody else had already fallen asleep. Even their own guard. Their own guard differed from the rest of them in that they slept on the floor and not on the shelves. He also slept on the floor because his shelf was too short. But the guard was not relieved at night. No one told him to take his turn on guard.

He spread the blanket on the floor and covered himself with the coat. But he had been mistaken when he thought that the safety razor would no longer serve as his pillow. It was his pillow now and he slept peacefully until morning and, in his dream, he had a pleasant chat with the General Staff, with the Russian General Staff. At last he was permitted to tell them that he had always followed the case of Ivan Matveievitch with great interest, that Oblomov's affair was of great importance to him, that he had always felt sorry for poor Olga Sergeievna and that . . .

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE stations had beautiful romantic names: Berdichev—Thula—The train stopped everywhere for hours.

At last, hopefully and excitedly, they heard that the next stop would be Moscow. Moskva. One could not tell just what they expected of Moscow, but they did expect something. A change, perhaps. Already a signpost came into sight. That was the first disappointment. Until now, the fact that the names of the cities were written in Cyrillic letters had not struck him as peculiar. There had been something strange,

something extraordinary in those Cyrillic letters. Here, however, when he read the sign Mockba, it was disillusioning, it was almost painfully unpleasant. Of course, he knew that it should have read Moskva, yet it was comical, annoying—Mockba—Mockba—It seemed to him precisely as if a well-dressed gentleman in evening clothes had appeared with an old-fashioned woman's hat on his head at a ball.

Captain Kenéz had been right, the journey had taken fourteen days. It would have been quicker by express train. The last day, however, was more pleasant than the previous ones. Until that day, the guards had been extremely strict. They had not allowed them to leave the wagon without supervision, had forbidden them to open the doors except for a narrow slit through which they could hardly poke their noses.

They enjoyed a little freedom on the last day, however. He was responsible for it.

He awoke unusually early on the last day. He opened his eyes lazily, and only a little, and then he saw something strange. The older soldier, the smarter, the more disciplined, the harsher of the two, was also awake. He watched the Russian cautiously. The guard looked round and when he saw that all were asleep, the prisoners as well as his companion, he took, with a deep and heavy sigh, a small bag out of his bread-sack. He opened the small bag and took Jewish prayer-straps out of it—leather prayer-straps—sighed again—looked round cautiously again—then stealthily wound the straps around his arms and forehead. It took but a few minutes, the Jew was already hastily tearing the straps off his arms and forehead, when he mercilessly spoke to him, in German:

"*Sie, Jude!*"

The old soldier very nearly collapsed with terror. Tears were hiding in his eyes.

He reproved him. Quietly, without harshness, instructively. Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Why were you so hard on us?

The wretched Jew kept silent. Once he wanted to interrupt him, but he would not let him:

"*Schweigen!*" he said loudly.

This frightened the Czar's poor old Jew, he was afraid that some one would find out his secret. He begged him with his eyes, like a beaten dog, not to betray him, not to give away his secret.

He told the poor Jew that if he would not behave decently he would tell everybody that he was a Jew. And then no one would respect him. The tortured Russian nodded and tried to exonerate himself. He said, quietly and with downcast eyes, that if his colleague had found out that he was a Jew he would have refused to obey him. Let alone the officers! Had they known it—why, they might have escaped. And he was responsible for them. If one escaped, he would be sent to the front at once. This way, however, there was a chance that he might stay in the back area for several months more, provided he was satisfactory as a guard.

He did not betray to any one their mutual secret, but from that moment on, he merely had to wink and the Jew obeyed him. When they reached a station, he ordered him to open the doors. He assured him that nobody would escape. At noon, he made a collection among the prisoners and collected a rouble for each of the guards. When he handed the money to them, he told them that they would have received a rouble every day had they behaved more decently.

The two Russian soldiers were downhearted, they were sad that they had lost this income, their hearts ached because this was the last day and the easy money was lost forever. They sighed and gloomily played with their beards.

They did not go into Moscow. The train turned away from it just as the train of their life had been turning away from everything these past years. It was now running on a side-track, just as all the peoples of the earth had been side-tracked for years. The side-track led to a camp of Red Cross buildings. They got out there, and were told that they would stay there for several days. When they got off, the two Russian soldiers, the Jew and the Moslem, took leave of them amidst tears and repeated expressions of regret; the Moslem even said that it was possible that they might never, never again meet, never again in this life.

He cried bitterly, and he shook his head as if he had been

praying, his tears flowed freely—as if the thought of never meeting again was utterly terrible.

He was constantly annoyed, during their stay near Moscow, by that peculiar name. He could not forget it. What a disappointment. Now everything that he had drawn for himself, in such fine, beautiful lines, everything that he had been longing for so reverentially all his life, everything had become—well, full of typographical errors. Grotesque. As if some one had wickedly printed below the picture he had painted of Moscow: Mockba. He tried to read it differently. No, it was impossible. He had lost Moscow for ever and for good, Moskva, the Holy City—

Instead of the romantic Moskva, he got a city of log barracks teeming with prisoners of war and mysterious, busy Red Cross sisters. The sisters pretended to be extremely busy. He did not know whether they were sweating day-labourers of mercy or princesses. They did not know. The sisters gave them something to eat and hurriedly distributed some underwear. They told them they might write home. On special post-cards, "for prisoners only." The sisters distributed those too.

He made new friends, besides Lányi and Szivacsek. The bespectacled Kajaba, for instance, and little Tánczos.

"How did you get here? Why, you aren't of age yet!"

"I am seventeen. I joined up as a volunteer for the duration of the war. I also wanted to do my duty—"

Little Tánzcos enjoyed separately every piece of underwear he got and called every officer above twenty "Uncle." He was very frightened about his rank, he had been only a volunteer-corporal before he had been captured, and now he begged him several times not to betray him to any one.

He felt sorry that this young boy, who said that it had been his duty, was also in it. He saw only one man who still wore the stripes of the aspirants. He must have been in his middle thirties. It struck him as peculiar that no one had said anything to this poor fellow about his rank. His name was Novák; he washed his underwear and shirt modestly apart from the rest of them, he did not discuss with them their great plans. He was working on a book, or something,

whenever he had a moment to himself. Whenever there was a chance, he sat down and wrote, page after page.

He went up to him.

"Tell me, do you intend to stay like this, an aspirant?"

"Yes, I do."

"But supposing you're sent to a camp for the ranks?"

"Well, I'll be sent to where I belong. I can't cheat."

"Why not? Why can't you? If everybody else—"

"I cannot. I am a government employee at home, that's why, I am with the Treasury Division at Nagykároly, and I know how precisely these things are entered in reports. I can't risk my job—"

"You mean, your job at home?"

"Yes, my job at home. If they find it out, they'll sack me at once. I can't take the risk."

"And what are you writing all day long?"

"A play."

You don't say so. Sandor Novák, prisoner of war, clerk in the Treasury Department at Nagykároly, writing a play in Mockba. And he would not risk his job at home. He was taking great care of his reputation.

"Do you want to present it here? at the Moscow Art Theatre? or at the Czar's Opera? Where?"

"All right, laugh. But tell me, what do you think; how long are we going to be here in Russia?"

Of course. How long? He had never thought of that. Well, my God, until Christmas. At the most, until Easter. Perhaps. Until Easter. And then he would be telling old Kathe, their cook: You know, when the buglers sounded the cease fire, meaning that the war was over, all along the lines, in all the trenches, on both sides, the soldiers raised white flags and jumped out of the trenches, and met halfway between the lines, and shook hands—Or wouldn't it be like that?

"Well, what do you think? What's your opinion, Sándor?"

"If you want to know it: I am satisfied if it won't take more than three years. Furthermore. I am of the opinion that we shall settle down somewhere and we shall be frightfully, excruciatingly bored. There won't be any wine, there won't be any women, nor books, nor any amusement. We'll

have to scratch something out of the earth, if we don't want to go mad. That's what I think. And then I'll come with my insignificant rank and I'll read you my play. And I'll read you my novel, too, and the short stories I am working on, Because I am writing novels, too. And you'll beg me to do something for you. And then I'll make a theatre for you. We'll study the parts and present the play and you'll all be happy. You'll see—"

Happy author! He will take the World War by its horns and force it to give him a chance to see his play acted!

"And what's the title of your play?"

" 'The Lawyer.' By Ferenc Molnár."

"What do you mean? Isn't it by you?"

"Of course not. It's by Molnár. Don't you know 'The Lawyer'? I also have a short story by Heltai. I am working on it now. I write down what I still remember of it. That's how I wrote the play. I have to hurry. Thank God, I can still remember them, very clearly. But later on, I may not be able to remember anything. For the time being I have these, but I hope to be able to put together one or two more things."

In the distance the tower of the Kremlin was visible, and all of a sudden he felt the Holy City distinctly and exhilaratingly. And Mr. Novák also, of the Treasury Department, who was feverishly working on the bank of the Moskva, on Ferenc Molnár's comedy entitled "The Lawyer" and on Heltai's humorous short story. It was a solemn and sacred moment, and he stared at the clerk who did not want to deceive the Treasury but painted sets for a theatre of the future, standing in the doorway of an unknown fate, drifting on the waves of an ocean of human, inhuman and eternal struggles.

CHAPTER XXIX

THERE were no coats or blankets distributed. All a prisoner got was two shirts of very poor quality and some thin undervests. The Russians had begun to pay the allowances already on the way to Moscow, they had not discriminated between the aspirant and captain; everybody had received

fifty roubles. For the time being, the aspirants were regarded as officers. But their own superiors reminded the aspirants that this situation might not be permanent, that perhaps they had been paid by mistake, and warned them to be careful. They might be compelled to pay it back.

Szivacsek, in a close circle of friends, read and translated to them, from the Russian newspapers, the Russian official *communiqués*. These spoke of huge numbers of prisoners, of fifty thousand officers and half a million other ranks. There were so many in their own camp that they were ready to give credit to the Russian bulletins. Deep down in their hearts, secretly, they were happy that all had happened thus, they thought the war would be over soon, such losses could not possibly be made up. But then suddenly, as if to discount their instinctive wish, they broke out angrily and loudly:

"It was only those damned fox-holes—God blast the fellow who invented them—That was what did for us—"

At first, the officers of high rank formed exclusive groups; there were groups of officers from majors up, groups of captains. Then, for no discernable reason, these groups broke up. They seemed to enjoy mixing with their inferiors. At least they acted as if they did. But the friendship lasted for hours only. Then they began to regulate them, to keep them in order. A commandant was absolutely necessary, they said; everything would fall to pieces without commandants. And adjutants were also necessary, and detachment-commanders, and officers' meetings.

These hints soon destroyed all possible chances for making any kind of organization, and as soon as a group noticed an approaching captain or lieutenant-colonel it quickly dispersed.

He hardly knew how, but he found himself taking part in an officers' meeting. There were thirty in the room in which he was, and there was a pleasant but smart and strict lieutenant with them. Koltár was his name. He talked so much to them that finally they adopted various regulations. They decided to nominate a man to watch their belongings, one to look out for cigarettes, meals and anything else which might be distributed by the Russians, and one to look after the

mailing of post-cards. These were relieved every hour. Those missing from the room for more than two hours were to be looked on as delinquents. Szivacsek was appointed reader and announcer; he himself was to take care of proper ventilation. Lieutenant Koltár requested them to report to him everything out of the ordinary. In the afternoon, some one did, in fact, report something to him, and in the evening, they all reported to him, standing rigidly at attention, saluting correctly, and Koltár was no longer requesting anything. He was already commanding. Just as at home, in barracks. Before they went to bed, the adjutant read to them the orders of the day—Koltár organized them so thoroughly that he was already issuing orders of the day, and he ordered them to be ready at nine o'clock the following morning for an officers' meeting.

The officers' meeting was correctly held the next morning. Not one of them objected to it, not one of them found it queer, all of them stood rigidly according to Regulations, and they stood at ease only when Lieutenant Koltár, after the adjutant had reported to him the number of officers present, requested them to "stand comfortably, gentlemen."

Lieutenant Koltár then rendered an account of what had happened so far, announcing that he would take good care of the welfare of the group, that he would do everything in his power to learn of possible distributions in advance. He asked them to trust him. Thus, for instance, he had learned already that there was to be an issue of two pounds of sugar per man, and he had already made arrangements that each and every one of them should get it. For the time being, his efforts to secure coats and blankets had been in vain, therefore he requested those gentlemen who had none to be patient. At three in the afternoon everybody should be here, they would go bathing, and he would see to it that all should get their bath. A complaint had reached him that Artillery-Aspirant Simonyi, when taking water out of their common water-tank, had put his hand into the water. Such things are not in accordance with the spirit of comradeship.

Aspirant Simonyi stepped forward.

He was a tall, dark young man and he defended himself excitedly.

Lieutenant Koltár severely informed him that he had no right to speak until he was given permission to do so. He should request to be permitted to speak and to defend himself, he did not need to be alarmed, he would not be denied an opportunity of being heard. But one could not interrupt the commander of an officers' meeting.

Simonyi went even paler and stammered even more excitedly.

But nevertheless, he clicked his heels and stood at attention, and begged for permission to present his defence.

Lieutenant Koltár granted the permission.

Whereupon Simonyi presented his defence. He said that his father was a university professor in Budapest, and hence it was inconceivable that he should have done such a thing, he had been brought up better than that. He had not put his hand in the water. When he had heard that the tank was there for all of them, he had tied a cord to his flask and he had dipped the flask into the tank. Dipping a flask into the water might be just as insanitary as putting one's hand into it, for flasks were just as full of germs as hands; but he had not put his hand into the water.

Lieutenant Koltár declared that, as far as he was concerned, he was satisfied with Aspirant Simonyi's explanation, and he hoped that the officers' meeting would join him. Gentlemen, do you accept Aspirant Simonyi's explanation?

The meeting unanimously accepted Simonyi's explanation and thus they tacitly acknowledged Lieutenant Koltár as their commander. He had now the right to call them to account, to make roll-calls, to order them to vote. Within twenty-four hours, a constitutional monarchy had supplanted the unorganized mob, they had created it themselves, they did not know how, but now they had a leader, they had a parliament, they even thought that they had universal suffrage. After the meeting, Lieutenant Koltár ordered four men to stay in the room, two to look after the officers' belongings, and two to watch for possible distributions of food

or anything else. The others might leave, but the guards would be relieved in two hours.

He learned that there were officers' meetings in the neighbouring rooms, and also in the other barracks. There were rooms where meetings had already taken place last night. Yes, no doubt, it was necessary to have some sort of order, otherwise everything would be topsy-turvy, and if we had to have commanders, it was better to have our own men than Russians. But it was queer that they should have thought of it everywhere at the same time, it was queer that the sugar was mentioned everywhere, and that all the room-commanders and all the group-commanders knew of the bath, too. There was some one in every room who voluntarily took over the task of worrying for the rest.

The sugar story was true. Lieutenant Koltár left with two men to fetch it, and it was interesting to see that the Russians did not distribute it individually but to groups only. No doubt, it was convenient to have some one to fetch the stuff. But they had lost direct contact with the distributing stations. Lieutenant Koltár told them that he would do everything in his power to take good care of them, but if any of them did not like it here, he might go to another room or to another group; he advised them to think this over now, because this group would be a model group, and he hoped that the comrades would not tolerate a disorderly person among themselves. No one moved, and Lieutenant Koltár said he was very glad to see that they had all decided to preserve order, and that they all honestly and voluntarily shouldered the responsibility of discipline and order. In the afternoon, some of them were already proudly boasting to officers of other rooms that they had picked a very smart room-commandant.

Lieutenant Koltár called another officers' meeting in the afternoon and, after bathing, they all gathered round him. The question before the house was an order from the Russians ordering the camp to form smaller groups. A group of seventy-five men was to go to the Province of Kostroma, a very healthy region on the banks of the river Undsa, a tributary of the Volga. The name of the town was Makariev.

Seventy-five men, under the command of Lieutenant Koltár, were to go to Makariev. They did not see the Russian order, they did not know whether it said anything about Lieutenant Koltár, but Lieutenant Koltár declared that only those should join his group whose intentions were honest. The intentions of all of them were honest, consequently they all joined Lieutenant Koltár's group, but there were only thirty of them altogether, and they needed more men. Other lieutenants also joined their group. Among them was one Matolcsy, a regular, and one Kömives, a reservist, professor at a provincial *Gymnasium*. From among the old acquaintances, Lányi and Szivacsek joined the group.

Lieutenant Koltár announced that the group was entitled to take along five orderlies. Second Lieutenant Sándor Papp begged permission to bring along his brother, who was a private, as one of the five orderlies. They need have no fear, he assured them, his brother would carefully attend to all duties. If the meeting had nothing against it. Second Lieutenant Papp's brother would be one of the five men.

All acquiesced,and thus Second Lieutenant Papp's brother came with them, because of this touching exhibition of brotherly love.

True, Lieutenant Papp's brother behaved very modestly: nevertheless, several men began complaining even before the group started. They said that he waited on Second Lieutenant Papp only and did not attend to the others. As a matter of fact, he was always with his brother, and while Second Lieutenant Papp was eating his dinner, sitting on blankets on the floor, his orderly brother stood at his side and humbly attended to his every wish. Some of them said that Second Lieutenant Papp did all this in order to demonstrate that he expected no special treatment for his brother, but others contended that he exaggerated it.

Second Lieutenant Papp had just finished a big piece of buttered bread, and his brother was giving him another slice, when Second Lieutenant Papp graciously waved it aside and said:

"You may eat it, I don't want it. But first bring me a cup of tea."

The orderly Papp obediently ran off to fetch tea for his brother . . .

CHAPTER XXX

"ALL aboard for Makariev! Platform Number Three!" shouted the boys the next morning. They did not travel in cattle-trucks now, everybody got a seat, and Lieutenant Koltár, smiling mysteriously, asked them:

"I hope you are satisfied?"

They were very satisfied, and they did not stop to find out precisely what rôle Lieutenant Koltár had played in securing for them these carriages. It was true, however, that they had bathed several times in the past few days, that they had punctually received their money, that there had been enough sugar, some underwear, and that this third-class carriage with its wooden benches promised real comfort for the journey. They were permitted to write home, and Lieutenant Koltár said that he would see to it that the mail was properly forwarded. He too wrote home—and he wrote his letter in German, because they were allowed to write in that language only—and he wrote *Ich bin in Gefangenschaft geraten.* Lieutenant Koltar guaranteed that by the time they arrived in Makariev they would already have the answers: there was excellent communication with the Central Powers through Finland and Holland. They settled in a car and everybody gave up one kopeck daily for the guards, on condition that they should make no silly regulations and should let them ramble about at the stations; that they should not be always at their heels. Lieutenant Koltár guaranteed that no one would escape. This trip was an unforgettable experience. All the characters of Russian novels as they had lived in their subconscious imagination paraded before their eyes, as if in the finale of a romantic operetta: a long-bearded Russian priest rocked a baby in his arms, long-haired mujiks in multi-coloured shirts drank hot tea. A military band was playing at the station of Ivanova, reinforcement troops were going to the front.

Soldiers with flowers in the muzzles of their rifles were

taking leave of their families and, just as at that country station in Hungary, one could clearly see who were going to the front and who were slackers. One could immediately find the concert-director, and he tried to find Jeges too, and himself, and the three little girls, and he found them. These were no longer the old characters, these had come from a new novel. He did not understand Russian, yet he understood and knew everything, he saw clearly what was happening. The train carrying the soldiers to the front left the station, and they heard a soft, melancholy song coming from the departing train. Most probably they now sang in Russian that "My darling will not come—"

A goods train was standing on one of the lines, and in one of the trucks, on top of a load of logs, a red-shirted Russian soldier was playing the accordion. A crowd gathered round him. The Russian was a good-humoured fellow though he might have been a bit drunk, and he sang funny songs. They must have been funny because, after each verse, the girls burst into laughter. As a matter of fact, they giggled throughout the songs. A few Russian gentlemen also joined the group, they listened to the songs for a minute or two and then went on their way, with benevolent smiles on their lips. He would have liked to know what the Russian was singing about. He stared at him and at the group around him, and he imagined that he understood the songs, and he laughed, too; he laughed when the others laughed, he laughed from the bottom of his heart, heartily and loudly, he laughed at the precise moments when the others also burst into laughter.

All of a sudden Lieutenant Koltár appeared by his side and grimly asked him to follow him to their truck.

What was this? Why was it necessary for him to go back to his seat when the Russian sang so amusingly, when the peasants of Ivanova were so charming?

When they reached their carriage, Lieutenant Koltár called a few comrades together, and then declared that such things were at the bottom of all troubles and unpleasant regulations, and that he was very sorry that such a thing could have happened. It was highly regrettable that a cornet, who

was no longer a child, either, could have forgotten himself so completely as to mix with peasants and laugh with them at vulgar jokes.

He did not know that the jokes were vulgar. All he knew was that the Russian had had a red shirt on, that it had been good to bask in the warm sunshine with sweating mujiks in blessed brotherliness, that it had been good to bathe in the light-hearted and refreshing smiles of the peasant girls, that it had been good to look at the girls' snow-white teeth, that it had been good to see the white hair of an old peasant—

Lieutenant Koltár declared that if such things happened it would be impossible to maintain order. Officers could not possibly participate in such low amusements. A cornet, a gentleman, a future officer, should have enough knowledge of the rudimentary requirements of good taste not to mix with such company. And suppose that fellow there had been singing revolutionary songs? And suppose, for that, all the participants should be called to account? And suppose his action should bring trouble upon all his innocent comrades? Had he reckoned with that?

Lieutenant Kömives took the floor. He declared that he was the senior lieutenant in this detachment and, therefore, as a matter of fact, it should have been his duty to take over the command. But he was an elderly man, and this was the reason why he had surrendered the command to Lieutenant Koltár. The commandant should be an energetic man. He had not dared to take the responsibility. But even he would never have dreamed of such a thing occurring in their midst.

He begged them not to make the difficult position of the command even more difficult. Such occurrences might be directly responsible for disciplinary measures, and that would be very disheartening. He begged them to refrain in the future from such transgressions in their own interests. And, of course, in the interests of their detachment.

He would have liked to answer—I too—I too was brought up properly—just like Simonyi—I am a Doctor of Laws, I know the Regulations—But, quite aside from that —I am thirty-two—I have a wife, a child, I support a family—although lately I couldn't get a job—Allow me to

say, gentlemen, that if I were at home now—If I were at home—I'd be handling serious cases—What's the use of making so much fuss about this? What for? Tell me I shouldn't do it again and I won't—

It seemed that Lieutenant Koltár guessed what he wanted to say and answered before he could speak. He said that one could not possibly be everywhere all the time, everybody should have enough sense of duty, he hoped this was a good lesson to him for the future, he would not like to have it repeated—

In spite of all this, the sun shone merrily and he tried to forget the incident. But, from that moment onwards, there was a tension in his relations with Koltár. The others, so it seemed, wholly approved of Koltár's energetic measures and, in one of the carriages, they were still talking about what would have happened had the Russian soldier really been singing revolutionary songs, had the Russian authorities surrounded them just at that moment.

He drank his tea dejectedly, and he dared not look at the peasants, and the tension in his relations with Koltár expressed itself in a strict military behaviour on the part of each of them toward the other. Koltár travelled in another compartment, and whenever they met at a station he saluted Koltár, often several times a day, and Koltár always correctly returned his salute. Now he was nothing but a subordinate to Koltár.

At last they left the train. They left it at a small town on the bank of the Volga. Kinijma was the name of it. The orders of the day informed them that, from there on, they would continue their journey by boat. At first on the Volga, then on the Undsa.

He was excitedly waiting to see the Volga as they marched across the dusty little town. Large billboards announced the arrival of a new moving picture, and he noticed that the posters were in no way different from the ones he had been accustomed to see in small Hungarian towns. The name of the theatre or the place where the performance was to take place was written across the poster in red pencil. The street dipped down-hill, and all of a sudden the Volga was before

them. He did not know what he had in common with these small towns, what he had in common with these little shops, with the passers-by in coloured shirts, but there was a sort of uneasiness humming within him, as if he had already seen these men, all of them; as if he had already met these men, with their flat caps, these big-bellied merchants, these cab drivers with shawls round their waists; as if he had seen them already; as if he had already embraced the dream-river, the wide, yellow, oily-looking Volga—as if he had come home to this country, having been torn from it long, long ago . . .

He strolled into a shop and bought himself a straw basket, the sort people used hereabouts; he ate a veal cutlet fried in butter in a restaurant, he secretly embraced the waiter, the restaurateur, the patrons, who were at first surprised when they saw his foreign uniform, but later stared at him in a very friendly fashion.

At last they were aboard the *S.S. Nikolai*, and the boat floated with them on the Volga, on the wide, dignified waters of the Volga. They travelled third class, but they were permitted to eat in the second-class dining-room. He would have liked to see Russian princesses, noble girls with doleful eyes, but they were mostly fat merchants at the tables, and they gobbled up the dishes greedily. He already knew the priest with the baby from the train, and his frail wife, too, who took care of the parcels and always had some trouble with the baby's linen.

The Undsa was much smaller than the Volga. There they changed to a small boat which was filled with simple peasants. The river was very shallow at this time of the year, and all at once the boat ran aground. All went ashore, and the captain of the boat gave the peasants a big rope.

Two peasants in coloured shirts carried the rope to the shore. But before they did anything, they all sat down on the grass. They drank tea, and all around, on the grass, sat peasants, peasant boys, peasant girls. They picked sorrel leaves and chewed them and ate white bread, and stared at him amicably, almost longingly. It was obvious they wanted to make friends with him. He smiled back at them, and said to himself that no matter what might happen, even if he died,

he would drink tea with them. Stubbornly he sat down among them, he cared nothing for Lieutenant Koltár, nothing for his regulations, and he gave them sugar, and they warmly shook his hands, and a Russian girl with a snow-white skin gave him tea—

At last the peasants rose and tied the rope to the boat, and lined up along the bank, and the Russian fields echoed the heartrending, sweet melody:

"*Ei uchnem*—"

The peasants pulled the boat off the shoal to the rhythm of the song, and he was among them, and he, too, pulled at the rope and pulled at it happily, full of indescribable joy . . .

CHAPTER XXXI

THE boat ran aground three times before they reached Makariev. Three times they went ashore, to pull at the rope; the sunny, festive scene with the tea-drinking peasants and the sign-language was repeated three times. There was not even sign-language, to be sure, only smiles, and there was forgiveness and love in the smiles of the peasants, in the laughter of the peasant girls in straw slippers, in the tanned soldiers on leave of absence. Thrice they appointed him their brother amidst wordless and smiling rituals, to the liturgy of the common tea-cup and the common rope . . .

The wide, sandy bank beckoned to him, and the little rowing boats, the small villages, the lonely mansions, the woods. In the distance: fishermen, women, washing linen in the river, bathing children, and once in a while, a many-towered monastery—

"Officers' meeting!"

In the third-class "lounge" of the weather-beaten Undsa boat, standing somewhat aside from the respectfully staring peasants, Lieutenant Koltár rendered a report after the roll-call:

"The journey will come to an end to-night. We shall arrive to-night at this place Makariev, where we shall be interned for the time being. We don't know any details yet,

but, for the sake of united action, mutual understanding is necessary. We may achieve something, but only if we appear united against the Russians, and trust our command. There is strength in acting together. Among ourselves we shall continue to maintain our own discipline, which so far, has been exemplary and admirable. We have our own regulations, which are of proved value and obligatory for all of us; we shall not worship alien gods but adhere to our own, to our own order. And, since Lieutenant Kömives is the senior lieutenant present, I will now call on First Lieutenant Kömives, who will explain certain things."

Out there, the clear waters of the Undsa rippled, on the banks silent monks weeded the gardens of monasteries, the setting sun poured carmine over the countryside, Count Tisza spoke frankly to the House about the losses in Volhynia, a fisherman's net was caught in a long since sunk raft, the newspapermen in the editorial offices of the *Népszava* had already arrived, somewhere in the Dunantul, a government official angrily dismissed a war-widow who dared to claim her pension, a diplomatic messenger was eating his dinner in the dining-car of the Orient Express, a woman at Erkörtvélyes had just received official notification of her husband's death and was sobbing her grief aloud, somewhere behind the lines a lieutenant asked another card to "five" in baccarat and lost his equipment allowance, a perfume manufacturer had at last succeeded in getting a contract, a large order for *Eau de Cologne* for officers, and was buying his wife a new diamond bracelet, a lung was pierced by a bullet, English gentlemen were bothered at the eighth tee because a messenger arrived from Westminster, a high-school student was cramming for an exam, a little girl was picking gooseberries, the be-flowered train from Ivanova was approaching the front, a court-martial sentenced a spy to death, dead soldiers rolled down into a valley from a hill. Hear, hear, Lieutenant Kömives.

He was hereby officially handing over the command to Lieutenant Koltár, who had always energetically and carefully represented our interests, and had maintained exemplary order. He himself would always gladly submit

himself to his orders, and he begged the gentlemen, especially the younger ones, cornets and down, to support the command so that there should be no cause for severe regulations. It seemed that the rumour that aspirants would not be treated as officers had been unfounded, the Russians had not discriminated against them so far, and as long as the Russians maintained their present attitude, our own command would also continue the present practice. The command did not wish to examine whether everybody was entitled to the rank he was at present displaying or not, but let all those who wore badges they were not entitled to be reminded that they were directly responsible for whatever action they had taken, and would have to account for their deeds upon their return to the Fatherland. And one more thing, and this would be his last official act before definitely surrendering the sole command to Lieutenant Koltár. "Never forget, gentlemen, that we are officers. Never forget that we find ourselves now in this humiliating position only because we were fighting for the Fatherland. Bear your sorrow with dignity and becoming grief. Until the time we are relieved of our burden, bear your fate with resignation, remember that, until our rehabilitation, we shall be suffering under the heavy weight of a grave accusation—even though we fought until our strength gave way, even though our falling into captivity was not our fault, but was entirely the result of our inescapable destiny. And, until the time when we are absolved from this horrible blame, until the moment when we may once more face the world with a clear conscience, we cannot honestly enjoy anything. Always express this state of mind in possible private intercourse with the enemy, never forget that there can be no possible relations between us and the enemy except when absolutely necessary, be careful never to relinquish your noble reserve and pride. And as far as the younger gentlemen, cornets and down, are concerned, I have a special request to make. I am aware of the natural desires of youth, but I beg of you, gentlemen, restrict these natural desires to the minimum. Don't let your blood and your natural instincts silence the grief of the patriot. Live modestly and restrictedly and with the utmost reserve. Don't

demand anything of women, don't appear bumptious and impertinent. If you are invited to a house, behave courteously and politely, as becoming a gentleman and an officer. And, especially, beware of the excessive use of intoxicants. Among many other bad habits, this noxious habit spreads extraordinarily at the front. Try, above all, to moderate the use of alcoholic beverages . . ."

Lieutenant Perényi then rose unexpectedly to address the meeting. He said that he had wanted to speak before. He said they continually talked about Lieutenant Kömives' surrendering the command to Lieutenant Koltár. Now it seemed to him rather queer that no one had asked him about this. For he was senior to both Lieutenant Koltár and Lieutenant Kömives. Any one could see this if he would only consult the lists drawn up for the command. He had been waiting to see whether any one would mention this. If we were expected to respect the regulations, we should adhere to all of them, and especially respect seniority. He demanded an explanation.

The General Staff was surprised and shocked.

At last Lieutenant Kömives rose and, stuttering, declared that this problem could have been discussed outside the officers' meeting and Lieutenant Perényi could have brought up the question when the younger gentlemen were not present. It was regrettable that it happened thus; nevertheless the problem must be settled at once, and therefore, the meeting would be adjourned. He requested the officers to come together again in an hour. He hoped that by that time they would find a peaceable and yet military solution.

In an hour the meeting was convened again. This time, Lieutenant Perényi accepted without demur the declaration that the meeting was ready to begin deliberations.

There had been a regrettable misunderstanding. But now the question had been settled openly and with military precision. Lieutenant Perényi did not want to be commandant; both he and Lieutenant Kömives were only reservists, and successfully to tackle the task ahead of him, the commandant must be a thorough soldier—one who had been accustomed to military discipline since early childhood. Therefore, both

of them surrendered the command to Lieutenant Koltár.

Lieutenant Koltár solemnly took over the command from the senior officers, and the grave problem was at last solved. Roll-call was the next item on the programme, and it was disclosed that Lieutenant Papp was missing. The lieutenant's brother gave no clue to his brother's whereabouts; he merely smiled and assured the meeting that he would be here presently. He was busy now. Finally it was revealed that he had withdrawn with the boat's charwoman to a cabin. He had even locked the door. Lieutenant Koltár knocked long and loudly on the door, but Lieutenant Papp replied that he couldn't be bothered just then.

They called the captain of the boat, but he merely smiled and said that he could render no assistance; let them be, he said; and even seemed sympathetic. But it was impossible to let the matter be; after all, it would exercise an extraordinarily demoralising effect on the younger gentlemen if nothing were done about it.

At last Lieutenant Papp turned up. He was annoyed and irritated and demanded to know why he had been bothered. The matter was no longer one to be discussed by the meeting; this incredible offence against discipline was not fit to be argued before the younger members. A council was immediately formed to try the case. But Lieutenant Papp declared that private affairs could not be tried by the council. This, however, was no defence, and everybody was enraged. Finally, a deposition was drawn up and the council announced that as far as retribution was concerned, it would be decided upon in Makariev. And if Lieutenant Papp continued to exempt himself from discipline the council would find ways and means to deal with him. After all, this was a nice way to express his gratitude for the permission given to his brother to come with them.

Members of the council immediately sat down and began to draw up the deposition in the light of a tiny oil-lamp, but for the time being, they got no farther than stating the broad facts of the case. They had to finish in a hurry, for the illuminated harbour of the little town was by now in sight, and they had to disembark.

They arrived in a peppery and querulous mood. There were many who sided with Lieutenant Papp, and who dared to utter the heresy that his private affairs could have no conceivable effect upon the fate of the group. But on the whole, the overwhelming majority was against Papp. These maintained that the command, which had taken good care of them so far, could not do anything if there was no discipline. Either Lieutenant Papp would defer to authority or he would be boycotted.

The excitement of the arrival was practically nothing compared to the excitement the argument had provoked, and they did not even appreciate the courtesy of the old Russian colonel who had politely come to the dock to meet them, and who delivered a neat little speech in their honour. The colonel was an old soldier with a hoarse voice, and he was deeply touched when he greeted them. He spoke in cracked tones and tears were flowing from his eyes.

Szivacsek said that he had wished them all the good in the world and had blessed them.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE summer flew like a light sailing-boat. They were divided into two groups and quartered in two houses. They learned that the Russian name of the white, elongated cake they ate for breakfast was *bulki*. They messed in a restaurant, they became familiar with Russian dishes and had ice-cream after lunch. Szivacsek read them war correspondence from the *Russkoye Slovo*. Once a Russian journalist wrote that the Hungarian fields would soon echo to the clatter of Russian hoofs. This he wrote in a report entitled "At the Foot of the Carpathians." They discussed it when they went to swim in the Undsa, and they talked of the chances of the contending armies while lazily enjoying the fine, warm sand. They were regularly paid, and the sugar rations were regularly distributed. Lieutenant Papp's affair was forgotten; they went for walks in the city accompanied by guards. The colonel paid them every respect, he clearly approved of the fact that they

had their own command, and he asked them several times whether they had any wishes, whether he could do anything for them.

One of their guards was a Muscovite tailor's apprentice, Pavel, a good-natured, genial youngster, who had voluntarily joined the army. He was an orphan. When they went for walks, he always requested that Pavel should be detailed as his escort, and Pavel talked to him in Russian, while he answered him in Hungarian. They did not understand one word of each other's talk, but they walked side by side like friends, and he often thought that the conversation of birds must have resembled theirs. It was of no importance whether birds understood each other or not, most probably they uttered sounds and chattered and twittered merely to hear each other's friendly voices.

One day he noticed that the colonel was following him. He must have overheard his conversation with Pavel, for he stopped them and, in a tone of reprimand, said something to Pavel. When the colonel left them, Pavel was sad and cast his eyes down, and no longer walked by his side, but followed him at a distance of two feet.

The next day, he learned from the orders of the day that Private Pavel Feodorovich had been punished with two days' cells for having neglected to maintain a properly respectful attitude toward a captive officer. Not only had he thrust himself upon him and walked close by his side, but he had also called the captive officer by his name, without adding either his rank to the address or the word, Mister, or the word, Sir. The colonel had promised that such things would not occur in the future. He again instructed the guards but, if anything happened, he hoped the offence would be reported to him. Full respect must be paid to the captive officers.

Lieutenant Hoffmann was the commandant of his group, the same officer who had been ordered by Captain Kenéz to place him under arrest in the forest of Darnitza. Lieutenant Koltár had retained command of the other group, which contained the older officers, but he was, at the same time, commandant of the whole Makariev detachment. Some of

them contended that, as a matter of fact, Koltár ought to be given the title of garrison commander.

There was always something the matter with Hoffman's group. The colonel provided excellent food for them, but they made complaints about it. They claimed they could have better food for the money they had to pay. Some of them stopped going to the restaurant, bought meat and vegetables in the market and cooked stews and goulash for themselves. And it was true that so they lived far more cheaply. But when more wanted to do the same, Lieutenant Koltár intervened, and declared that they could not do this on account of the colonel. It was obvious that the colonel was getting commission from the restaurateur; one or two might do it, but they could not possibly provoke the colonel's anger in this manner. Anyway, there was always something the matter with Hoffman's group. It seemed there was no discipline there.

And then there was the case of the sheets.

The officers shouldn't make so much fuss about them. The colonel had taken this business upon himself; he would certainly get them the sheets, mattresses, and bed-covers that they wanted. It was unwise to ask permission to buy them themselves. The colonel had a thousand ways at his disposal to repay their mistrust.

But, these things apart, it was really a holiday for them all. They walked about in the town, and there was the Undsa.— He wrote home enthusiastic letters about the clear waters of the Undsa, its wide, sandy beaches, the many-towered monastery farther up the bank.

The first letters from home began to arrive. Short sentences on green post-cards. They roused him from the joys of the "holiday." He received two cards in quick succession. The card from his family deeply moved him, they could hardly conceal their happiness, that he was secure at last, that he was no longer a part of that mad, killing rush. The other card was from his brother, and reading it, he realized that he had met his brother for the first time in his life.

He met his brother for the first time in his life, he saw him for the first time—

Strange and peculiar words were in the letter. "Dear brother, at last I am also doing my duty. People can no longer look at me with reproachful glances—"

His brother, who had been exempt, had voluntarily joined the Army. He wrote that he had been unable to look into people's eyes, he had read reproaches in them everywhere. "I could not bear it, I could not bear the thought that you, married and the father of a child, were at the front, fighting. I surrendered my exemption and joined up. I am now in an N.C.O.'s training school, my sergeant is very satisfied with me—"

His brother—who had been exempt—for whom his mother had worried, who could not bear the reproachful looks. But —who had looked at him reproachfully? The concert-director? The quartermaster? The sergeant with the tinned meat? The corporal who doled out the boots? Who? The men who read the official bulletins aloud? The pensioners who, after dinner, sat down and stuck little flags on pins into maps?

And then, "My sergeant is satisfied with me—" Who was that sergeant? His brother was a Doctor of Laws, thirty years old, a grown gentleman, and now he was happy and proud because his sergeant was satisfied with him! Did such people still exist? Poor mother, poor, poor mother. But how, how could he have guessed, how could he have known that Pyotr would not shoot him down in the attack? Incredible. His brother, yes, his brother now bared his proud, clean chest to the bayonets, and had sent him here, to a holiday in chains.

His brother was a believer and had no doubts, and saw the world around him clean and pure. A hero. So that was it. He had met his brother for the first time on the banks of the Undsa. It was there that they had first got to know each other. He had introduced himself only to-day.

He dropped the card wearily and collapsed. They put him on his bed and gave him vinegar to sniff, but he could not tell them what was the matter with him. He said, half in a feverish dream, half awake, that a great doubt had suddenly swooped down upon him and had shaken him. Something had broken within him, it was that which made him faint.

They listened to him benevolently, and they acted, the comrades acted, as if they believed him. They assured him that in a day or two, he would not even remember it. He ought not to go bathing in the Undsa, however.

Perhaps it was the Undsa, but the fact remained that he collapsed when he got the news. He did not go down to the Undsa any more, he merely sat at the window and gazed at the little side-street, and he reasoned that there must have been many more like his brother. Many more who did not know how to look after themselves, many more who knew nothing of the dangers of the Oriental markets for German dry-goods. And nothing of the Berlin-Bagdad railroad. Many to whom the world hegemony of the nitrate fields was of no importance. They just looked proudly forward and did not know that there were ditches before the trenches and deadly stakes at the bottom of the ditches. And what if they knew? Would the fact that he knew everything help him? That the one who knew did not have to face it? And what would he do when standing face to face with that little dark hole in the rifle pointed at him by a desperate and trembling hand? What?

And there was, for instance, Lieutenant Lencz, with four medals for bravery across his chest. He must have done something to get those four medals! Now he was eating his own food, outside the mess, was Lencz, but only until tomorrow. Lieutenant Lencz hoped that his four medals would be appreciated at home. He hoped that he would be appointed captain immediately upon his return. He hoped to join the Regular Army and never to go back to the little country school where he had taught the A B C before the war. But yesterday Koltár had said to him that if he would not give up this extra-kitchen business, a procedure wholly against discipline, he would render an unfavourable report of his behaviour to the authorities at home. In the trenches, Lencz had been indomitable, he had never been afraid, he had been decorated with four medals. Now he was intimidated by Koltár. He was frightened by the unfavourable report. He asked for one day to finish off the extra-kitchen business. There would not be any more goulashes for him

after to-morrow. To-morrow he, too, would eat Russian food and adhere to discipline. He had not been afraid of the dark little hole. But the report frightened him. Where was his heroism? the four medals? What was the matter with the four medals? He was afraid that Koltár's opinion of him would successfully counterbalance the weight of his four medals.

He could not see the hero in Lieutenant Lencz. Were these men the heroes? the men who, with diplomas in their pockets, with books and wise writings in their heads, of refined manners and impeccable tastes, suddenly and proudly boasted of their illiterate sergeant's praise? Were the heroes like these?

Autumn came and, one evening, the orders of the day contained surprising news.

The Russian authorities had decided to send the Makariev group to Siberia. It was for the first time in their lives that they heard the word Siberia, so sharply, so firmly, so cruelly.

He had known Siberia only from the jackets of cheap novels, Cossacks whipping a group of Nihilists. That was all he knew of Siberia. And now they would go there. And that Dostoievsky novel, and George Kennan's description of it—Horrible.

The colonel consoled them; they requested him to intercede on their behalf for permission to remain in the charming little town on the bank of the Undsa. It could not be done. The populace was already incensed enough against them as it was, for having caused a rise in prices. In Siberia, everything was cheaper, said the colonel. The thing could not be helped, but they did not need to worry.

It would be much better in Siberia, said the colonel.

CHAPTER XXXIII

SZIVACSEK, of whom he had always been envious because of his silver medal, first class, did not report on the last day. The colonel informed them just before their departure that Szivacsek would stay in Makariev. The colonel's son-in-law, a near-sighted lieutenant, who spoke a little German,

mysteriously winked at them and promised to let them know what had happened. Later he returned and told them that Szivacsek had joined the Czechoslovakian Legion.

Now they were left without an interpreter. An Austrian cornet, Lange, who had come with them, so he said, because he sympathized with the Hungarians, and to whom nobody had paid much attention before, now quietly looked up from behind his big spectacles and told them that he spoke much better Russian than Szivacsek. But he needed some one to translate his German into Hungarian. He immediately told Lange that he expected to publish a newspaper on the way. He had already bought carbon paper and plenty of writing paper.

The first number of the newspaper would be published in the Urals, and since, for the time being, it was planned to cover only the Siberian trip, its title would be *Trans-Siberian News*. Lange was in favour of it and promised his full co-operation.

They were again on the river-boat and the scene of their happy holidays was left behind. They did not know what the new place would be like. It was somewhere on the Amur River, that was all they knew, at a place called Khabarovsk. The colonel could hardly tear himself away from them, he shook hands with every one of them, and when the captain gave the signal to weigh anchor, he began to cry. He went ashore and then waved his handkerchief for a long time.

They stared at Makariev as it slowly receded in the distance. Two bright specks were running along the shore after the boat. They were two local high-school students who had fallen in love with two captive officers and were now running after the boat in a truly Russian, foolish, romantic fashion. They had never talked with the two officers, perhaps they did not even know their names, they had only known them by sight. They stood on deck and waved their handkerchiefs, and none of them knew, not even the two for whose sake the high-school girls were now breathlessly scampering on the shore, with whom they were in love. They all waved their handkerchiefs to the two sentimental souls running madly in the autumnal landscape. Suddenly the two bright specks

collapsed; they could not keep up the race with the boat, they collapsed on the hopeless field of their never-to-be-fulfilled hopes. The bushes along the bank hid them from view, and the boat went cruelly on its way.

They disembarked at a small town, called Manturovo. They marched a distance of several miles from the quay to the railway station. It was a little cold already, and the train was due to arrive late at night. It was after midnight when, weary and fatigued, they rose to drag themselves to the track where the train was waiting. They wanted to board it, but then something happened.

Lieutenant Koltár issued orders against boarding the train in the interests of the group. They were going to Siberia, he said, and everybody knew it was frightfully cold there, and he would not let the group make the journey in goods trucks. He shouldered all responsibility but told them not to break his command, or else his plan would have no success. The colonel at Makariev had told him that captive officers were entitled to at least third-class passenger coaches and, therefore, he informed the station-master that the officers went on strike because of the goods trucks. They would not board the train unless coaches were placed at their disposal.

Confusion followed Koltár's speech. The station-master, an inefficient little provincial clerk, was already on the scene, yelling, shouting, bawling. He had two railwaymen and a porter and he ordered them to put the officers' parcels in the goods trucks.

First Lieutenant Koltar repeatedly informed the station-master that they would rather die on the spot than board the goods train.

The miserable little station-master in his threadbare uniform was completely impotent. He tried persuasion now, and promised them that if they would get into the train he would wire ahead and, at the next station, the goods trucks would be exchanged for third-class carriages.

No! No one moved. They were definitely on strike in the cold Russian night. They put whatever parcels they still had with them on the ground and sat down. There was not a sound audible in the excited silence.

The station-master now resorted to threats. He threatened to send a telegraphic report of the event to Moscow. He would wire the authorities that the prisoners were terrorizing him. He gave them ten minutes to change their minds.

He returned for the answer in ten minutes.

They decided not to board the train. Not as long as there were only goods trucks available.

The station-master flew into a rage. Now he knew what to do. He would show this insubordinate bunch of prisoners! Fuming and raging, he got in his little droshky and drove away.

Lieutenant Koltár now held an officers' meeting. He informed them that the strike was successful so far. It was not very military, but they had been forced to resort to this drastic measure. An officer was entitled to at least a third-class coach, and even if they did not succeed eventually, they could not retreat now. Honour forbade that. He hoped that no one would be a coward. "We escaped death on the field of honour, but, if it is necessary, we shall die here, in the Province of Vyatka: we shall die here, in Manturovo, for the sake of honour. And if we die here, we shall die here too for the purity of the officer's sword knot. Let us show them that we are not afraid of death."

They all promised it and they all swore that they would hold out to their last breath.

To be sure, there was a little exaggeration in Lieutenant Koltár's vow. It was easy to swear to hold out. The station-master merely wanted to frighten them. Now he had left, but he would be back in no time, and then he would start yelling again. Or he would bring a *tchinovnik* from the town with him, and then there would be two to curse. Some of them maintained that his behaviour was only an expression of his impotent rage. He wouldn't dare to report it to higher authorities. If he did so he would most probably receive the answer that the captive officers were right, how did he dare to think of putting them in goods trucks when they were entitled to coaches? Just go ahead and give them what's their due. He would not have the courage to wire to Moscow. A station-master in a small town like this! As large as, let's

say, Ermihályfalva. Or, at most, as Szolnok. He is glad if Moscow lets him alone. He's just gone to give vent to his rage. He will complain about it, in the "Restaurant of the Lion" of Manturovo, to the local tradesmen playing billiards. Then he will come back. And when he sees that he can't do anything, well, we'll talk to Koltár and agree to travel in goods trucks. Assuming they provide enough planks and boards to lie on, and enough wood to feed the little stoves in the wagons. It'll be quite a pleasant trip.

Koltár was sitting among them, and after a while declared that they would board the goods trucks only of their own free will. Provided, of course, that the unfortunate station-master really had no coaches at his disposal. "What else can we do? But, until the command is given no one shall move. We may do it of our own free will, but we shall certainly not defer to force, to shouts, to terrorism."

The station-master's droshky was visible on the highway. Now it turned into the little alley that led to the station. It stopped, the station-master got off, but he did not come to them. He went straight to his office.

Now it was obvious that he had complained about the strike to the tradesmen only. Well, Koltár would go in to him in about an hour and everything would be settled. We were unwilling to defer to force, but now we accept the goods train of our own free will. The station-master would be happy, poor fellow, and when they were out of sight, he would most assuredly murmur a silent prayer in gratitude.

Dust clouds rose on the highway. In the dim light of the early dawn, they saw the lances and horses of a squadron of Cossacks. They turned into the alley. In front of the station, they dismounted—

Were they—were they coming here?

They entered the station and an N.C.O. lined them up. They carried their rifles across their backs. In their right hands, knouts, with leather thongs.

Now the station-master came out of his office. The Cossack N.C.O. saluted him and waited for his orders.

Then the N.C.O. stepped up to them and asked who was in command of them.

Lieutenant Koltár stepped forward.

He called Lange to act as interpreter.

The Russian N.C.O. called upon the group to surrender, to stop this futile rebellion. He asked them to board the train at once in order to avoid unnecessary bloodshed.

Lieutenant Koltár replied that the group had the right to decide its own fate.

He turned to the alarmed group and asked them whether there was any one who wanted to surrender. "Or shall we hold out?"

"Hold out!"

Now they had to hold out. It was a question of honour. It would have been vile cowardice, utter shame, to surrender now. They were desperately ready and they waited for the inevitable retaliation.

The Cossacks surrounded them. They unslung their rifles, ready to fire. Some of the captives declared that if they shot now they might injure some of their own men. Others said they were for it now. Up to their necks. It was a question of honour, they could not possibly surrender now, but the lives of seventy-five men should not have been risked so foolishly.

So that was it. Nobody could avoid his fate. Thus it was written: they had to die for the sake of the sword-knot. Here they would fall bleeding into the dust, here, on the station of Manturovo, between the second and third tracks.

The silence was horrifying.

The Russians asked them to surrender every half-hour. After the third request, the Russian sergeant turned to his men and gave a loud command.

They closed their eyes.

The Russian rifles rattled, and when they opened their eyes again, the Cossacks were again standing in line, their carbines slung across their backs. They had not fired. Then they marched out of the station.

The station-master morosely asked for Commandant Koltár. He told him that he had telephoned to a neighbouring station and that he had succeeded in getting two third-class coaches for them. They would be here in half an hour.

He asked them to be patient until then.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE victorious revolution made them spiritless and gloomy. It took some time for the depression to thaw. Rifles had been pointed at them and they had risked their lives, yet, in retrospect, the whole thing seemed like a bad play, full of stupid and false phrases. And then, the rifles had not even been loaded. But they might have been, and then the incident could have been fatal. Why had it been necessary to take those chances? For coaches! They had heroically bared their chests to toy-rifles for third-class passenger coaches. And they now enjoyed the fruits and rewards of their intrepid audacity. They had fought for coaches and conquered. Did the people at home know that their small but brave group had gone dauntlessly to battle at the station of Manturovo, in the Province of Vyatka, for passenger coaches? Would it be mentioned in the official *communiqués*?

They might have died, every one of them. It was easy to say now that it had been merely an experiment, that it had not been serious. But they had closed their eyes and they had expected annihilation. They had been willing to fall on the battlefield of Manturovo between the second and third tracks. They had dived headlong into a ludicrous risk. For the mock pose of heroism, for the sake of imaginary and ludicrous romanticism, they had let go the hands of their wives and children. The Skull was still grinning at them, at the ragged comedians, at whose expense He had played a practical joke. How rashly and stupidly, for the sake of mere settings and footlights, had they thrown into the ditch the hope of their families! The only thing that had been left to them, poor beggars, trembling at home for their lives.

They had not even the satisfaction of being proud of themselves. Why, the Russians had not even wanted to shoot. They had been merely sent to the corner, like naughty children, and the nurse had frightened them. She had shouted at them, in a blood-curdling voice, moo-oo-oo, moo-oo-oo-oo. But they had paid no need to her, they had dauntlessly gone on misbehaving—

The train was approaching the Urals. Very poor, very discouraging little villages passed by, lean cows shivered in the fields, underfed, ragged peasant women stared at the train. It grew colder and colder, and all of a sudden snow began to fall. When they reached the station of Vyatka, the snow was falling in huge flakes, although, according to the calendar, it was only the third of September.

They saw, in the snowfall, a woman mowing rye, or oats, with a sickle. She wore a pair of big gloves, and she mowed the crop, and sadness settled upon their hearts as they gazed at her from the train-windows. What would Siberia be like if here already snow fell on the third of September?

They were in the Urals now, and the train was climbing higher and higher. The hills became higher and higher but, on the whole, the Urals were nothing like the Carpathians. Hardly a peak worth the name. Only pines and pines. The terrifying Urals were not to be seen. Judging by their reputation, they had thought they would meet majestic cliffs and cruel rocks emerging from glistening fields of snow, but there were only friendly hills and vast pine forests. Even the weather became milder.

They had two guards, Mustafimoff and Kantinov, and these gave them some idea of Russian geography. They said that the snowfall in Vyatka had been a most exceptional case. As a rule, winter began about a month later. It would certainly be warmer in Siberia. Mustafimoff became quite a celebrity among them, they found out that he was a Tatar from the neighbourhood of Irkutsk. He had three children and a wife, mother and father. He begged them to send a wire to his family, in a little village near Irkutsk, for him, to ask them to come to the train. He had been serving when the war had broken out, and he had not seen his family for four years. He was exceedingly happy at having been detailed to escort the train.

It was, after all, a consoling thing to know that there existed a human being who actually yearned for Siberia. It was interesting to know that there was a little village near Irkutsk and that, in that little village, little Mustafimoff children were waiting for Daddy Mustafimoff. They sent off the wire

as soon as they reached the next station, and Mustafimoff was so grateful for it that he began to cry. Then he warned them that they would be in Siberia in an hour.

"How shall we know that the train has left Europe?"

"Very easily. The border is in the middle of the Urals. There is a stone pillar between the two continents that marks the border-line. Beyond the pillar, it's Siberia—"

They all thronged to the windows and looked out for the pillar. Dejected and weary, they waited for the last symbol of the West. For the pillar that, standing mercilessly guard at the door of their prison, would definitely separate them from culture and civilization.

That piece of rock against which the pale goblet of hope broke into a thousand fragments—

At last—

At last there it was, white and simple, there it stood at the top of a hill, beyond a curve, near the line.

The engine whistled, it took leave of Europe, took leave of the Erechtheion, took leave of the Eiffel Tower, of Cologne Cathedral, of the Milan Scala, of Torquemada and Dante, of Ibsen and Rainer Maria Rilke, of the old Jewish cemetery in Prague and of the British Museum, of the horse-races at Káposztásmegyer and of the *Café Abbazia*, of the swift newsboys and of the Seven Years' War, of Byzantium and of Richard Wagner, of Richard the Lion-Hearted and of the Corvina Codices, of Quintus Horatius Flaccus and of March bock beer . . .

They stared with bulging eyes at the fatal pillar, and now they could decipher its inscription, black letters on white stone: EUROPE . . .

The train passed by the pillar, and they looked back at it, and now they saw the other side of it, they saw the other inscription, again black letters on white stone: ASIA . . .

So this was Asia—Siberia—with its vast territory, large enough to harbour the whole of Europe, with the exception of European Russia, but with the United States thrown in for good measure—with its vast forests of which Russian scientists had said that if thirty million men should start cutting them down with the most modern of machines, by

the time they finished their job, they could start it all over again, for in the meantime, the whole forest would have grown up again, it was so gigantic—

Siberia, whither half a million exiles had marched in forty years at the order of the Czar—Siberia, known to them only from the coloured jackets of cheap novels—Asia—cradle of mystery and vagueness —

The telegraph wires still ran alongside the train, and birds sat on the branches, the sun shone. Mustafimoff had been right, the weather was milder.

Everything swam in sunshine, and a Siberian pointsman saluted the train.

The group grew calmer, a few said that there was nothing of any interest any more, they sat down and cut bread and ate. Hot water was waiting for them at the next station, hot water for tea.

At the next station, he jumped out of the train. He raced to the station-house to look at the Siberian station-master. He wore a very threadbare suit of clothes and worn shoes, and he looked at him wearily and uninterestedly. In the Siberian third-class waiting room, a Siberian peasant was stretching himself on a Siberian bench, he was just awakening from a Siberian dream.

Mustafimoff had been right not only as regards the weather but also about the prices. Eggs were far cheaper here than in Europe. They gave two eggs for a kopeck in Siberia, but if you bargained, you could get four. If you bought in quantities, they gave you even six. They sold roast geese for thirty kopecks apiece, and the Siberian woman opened up the goose and showed that it had the liver, too. It was very nicely roasted, that goose, nicely and crisply, and the liver was fried separately and then put back again into the roast goose—

A woman sold pancakes at the station, another butter and sour cream and roast beef.

He went back to the car. He sat down near a window and gazed at the Siberian grass, and tears were slowly falling from his eyes. Not because of the market-place of Szatmár, that was left behind, nor because of Oscar Wilde. Nor because of the loss of his favourite morning paper, or because of Don

Quixote, the noble knight, or because of the Gothic relics, and the masterpieces of the Renaissance, and the curly hair of his son. He shed tears because he realized that he was the victim of a dirty deal, of an infamous treachery.

This pillar ought to be shown in schools! And all teachers ought to tell their pupils: Europe is on one side of it and Asia on the other. And, boys and girls, if I take this little rod in my hand, I can easily stick it into the ground both in Europe and in Asia. Half of the cloud is in Europe and the other half in Asia, and a butterfly flies easily from Europe to Asia—This station-master ought to be shown in the schools, too; look, boys and girls, this man is a station-master, for instance. His uniform is threadbare and his shoes are worn. The grease spots on his jacket are indistinguishable from European grease spots. They sell geese here and eggs and the only differences are that eggs are cheaper in Asia than in Europe and that they put the goose-liver back into the roast goose—But of the essential differences neither the goose, nor the butterfly, nor the shoes know anything. All these essential differences have been invented by the wise human brain, and the exiles are not the children of the eternal laws of Nature but of the mortal laws of the Czar. We put up the pillar at the borderline and we write on one side of it Europe, and on the other Asia.

Mustafimoff was standing by his side, grinning. The Tatar was talking to him but he could not understand what he said. He asked Lange to translate it for him.

"Mustafimoff wants to know whether you can see the difference between Siberia and Europe?"

"Tell him that I can't. Is there any?"

"Mustafimoff says that there are no fences round the gardens in Siberia."

"Ask him whether he has ever read Rousseau?"

Because—as a matter of fact—there are really no fences in Siberia—Rousseau wrote interesting things about this—but that this Mustafimoff—who most probably has never read one line by Rousseau—and yet—amazing—the fields and gardens are not separated here—of course—this ought to be taught in schools too—In Europe, they have ditches

and fences and they watch the gates carefully, and Mustafimoff is happy now because he has reached these common pastures—In all Europe only the fences caught his attention —What a keen mind this fellow Mustafimoff has?—He considers the fences more important than the Paris *Opéra*—An intelligent man . . .

CHAPTER XXXV

AT the next station, Cornet Lange returned with a Russian daily and told him that they could begin editing their newspaper. Lange read the Russian paper and told him what was in it. He quickly translated for him *communiqués* of the Russian General Staff, the bulletins of the Austro-Hungarian G.H.Q. and also those of the French. Then Lange dictated a few passages from the latest article of M. Filatov, war correspondent from the *Russkoye Slovo*. This was their material.

He took out three sheets of paper, put carbon paper between the sheets, and wrote down in neat, calligraphic letters: *Trans-Siberian News*, Volume I. Number 1.

He divided the sheet into three columns, and his first job was to write an editorial. He looked around the car, and suddenly he saw their whole group exiled and excommunicated. His heart was suddenly filled with tears and sympathy, his emotions became simplified, they were dissolved in a great common sorrow which was present even in the teacups and in the eggshells that flew merrily out of the windows, on to the Siberian steppes. Deep down, in the secret recesses of their hearts, there were hidden woes and gnawing grief; the eggshells, and the little jokes, and the petty worries, floated only on the surface. From thousands of miles away, trembling hearts watched the prisoners' train; and even though, in a corner, they played *márias*, there was yearning in the eyes waiting for the ace of hearts. There was gloom at the bottom of their hearts, and he decided to address his editorial to this feeling.

"Sad Hungarian wanderers, you"—thus the editorial began, and then it spoke of all that was dear to their hearts, of

the things at which they looked back with misery in their eyes. Riding on an iron monster to unknown fates and strange countries; they were racing past Samoyedic farms and Kirghiz tents, toward the shores of the legendary Amur.

Then came a passage from Filatov's article, and then the war bulletins. Editorial Note: Readers are respectfully requested to submit to the Editor all new jokes they think may be printed in the *News*.

The public of the two coaches received the paper with exuberant joy. They read it aloud and many burst into tears when they reached the phrase, "across Siberia, past Samoyedic farms and Kirghiz yurtas." The command immediately decided that the expense of the paper should hereafter be taken care of by the group. It was a very commendable and praiseworthy undertaking, and the subsequent numbers would be given to the officers, according to seniority, as souvenirs. In the evening, it was already in the orders of the day, and the names of the first officers to receive the first numbers were also mentioned. Those who had read the paper once asked for it again, and dreamed for hours over the blue lines.

This day did not belong to Siberia. They were all at home that day, and they talked to each other gently, tenderly, deeply moved. They were courteous to each other and polite, they lent soap and razor-blades to each other at the large stations where the train stopped for a longer time and there was a chance to wash.

He became more closely acquainted with a few hitherto rather reserved prisoners. They visited him in his compartment and sat round him and gently, peacefully smiled at him. There was a lean cornet among them, with the First Class Silver Medal on his chest. He waited until the others had gone, then sat down next to him and told him that he would like to be with him more often. Why, certainly, he politely answered, whenever you want to.

"Well, when you have some time on your hands, just send for me. Mustafimoff knows my name," he added, smiling, "although I don't suppose you do. Just tell Mustafimoff to call Joseph Body—"

"Of course, naturally, come any time you want to."

"I don't play cards, but I'd like to talk to you. I have plenty of time and I'd like to learn something from you—"

"From me? What could you learn from me? You don't want to become a lawyer? Or do you want to learn tactics, soldiering from me? I should imagine you know that better than I do—I see you have the First Class Silver—"

Joseph Body smiled sourly and waved his reed rod. He carried it with him all the time.

"Oh, not that. But—look here! I am a simple country teacher. So far, I have learned nothing but pedagogy and geography and history and I have doubts—I'd like to talk to you about these doubts—I'd like to talk over certain things with you. You could explain certain things to me. You've greatly impressed me—so perfectly guessing the sentiments of these boys here—"

"Guessing? They were my own sentiments."

"What do you mean? Are you, too, so deeply touched? Are you also so soft?"

"Aren't you?"

"I? No—not at all. Why should I be?"

"Can't you feel what's coming to us now? Can't you feel that we are about to enter an era of almost Biblical idylls? Left to ourselves and depending upon each other only, we shall live through a heroic age of brotherliness. Away from everything that is dear and precious to us, exiled and alone, we shall form a little island of brothers, in an alien ocean. We shall rescue whatever we may and we shall march forward, hand in hand, carrying the banner of a new, a tender religion—The most ideal soil is awaiting us, fit to bring forth an extraordinarily brilliant period—Opportunities are awaiting us, opportunities to ennoble and to exalt us. I should not be surprised if the prison were to produce a Dante or a Byron from among us—Free from all materialistic problems, free from all worries of bread, we shall have a chance to soar exclusively towards spiritual spheres—Our common sorrow will forge the chains of a new brotherhood among us—Can't you feel all this?"

"No, I can't—"

"Didn't you see the simple and childish happiness that welled up from their hearts upon receiving even this poor little gift of mine? Didn't you see how they read the lines, how they petted the familiar words, how tenderly they passed the sheets from hand to hand? The severe and grave command reserved place for it in the orders of the day, and carefully recorded the names of those who will be entitled to keep it as a souvenir. My dear Joseph Body, let me tell you this, noble fruits are ripening now, luscious and juicy fruits of mutual understanding, mutual—"

"Do you know how to graft?"

"Graft what?"

"Trees. I ask you, do you know how to graft?"

"No, I don't"

"I ask you because I do. Very well, let's assume that you have transplanted the men into another soil. Into a more productive one. But do you think that, if you transplant crab apple into a better soil, it will bear pomegranates? Yes, as far as the soil alone is concerned, it may. But do you think that's enough? Your little sheet is not a grafter, and the conditions aren't grafters either. All this is merely a little rain."

"And the sufferings? The battles? The struggles?"

"My dear friend Mr. Editor—all I can say is that all that is merely soil. A little rain has fallen, everything is greener now, everything more verdant, but all that has nothing to do with grafting. The sufferings have been left behind, the battle, too, and the struggles have ceased, but the trunk is still the same old trunk, and it will bear no pomegranates."

"Then tell me, how do you picture this grafting? How do you want to do it?"

Joseph Body looked out, toward the steppes, his asymmetrical eyes became slightly misty, and he answered in an amazingly hoarse, weary voice:

"That's just why I asked you whether you knew anything about grafting: to make you realize that whatever you do they are merely transplanted—and not grafted. I am inclined to believe that you can't graft humanity. That's one of the advantages the plants and beasts have over us. You can't improve the race. You have to wait—Time will weed

out what's bad—But only time can do the trick—Not the soil—nor the conditions—I don't think so—"

The second number was scheduled to be published at Tchulimskaya. He was already preparing the carbon paper, the nice white sheets; he was waiting for Tchulimskaya. It's famous for its cheese, said Mustafimoff.

As he took his pencils and sheets from the rack, a card-playing, long-moustached aspirant, by the name of Kovács, jovially addressed him:

"Are we going to have another number?"

"Yes," he answered cheerfully.

"Well, brother, take care a little regarding that Hungarian cradle of yours—Heart, heart, and heart again—I win the last trick, too—As I said, be careful about that Hungarian cradle of yours—Where in Heaven's name did you pick up the idea that the cradle of the Hungarian race was somewhere on the Amur? Even if it were so, it was certainly not on the northern Amur, and that's where we are going now—"

Lieutenant Gotthilf looked up from the book he was reading:

"Yes, and there's that other thing, about the Kirghis yurtas. What do you mean, Kirghis yurtas? Where are there any Kirghis yurtas, Kirghis tents here? Ridiculous. I bought a Faber 2B pencil at the station a couple of hours ago—But Kirghis yurtas!"

"But, can't you see, these are only symbols—to express the sentiments—"

"Sentiments, sentiments—You can't sacrifice truth to sentiments. Anybody who writes, especially one who writes editorials, must be careful—He must be careful not to hurt anybody, and, what's even more important, he must be careful never to lose sight of truth—That's good, Kirghis yurtas!"

It was acutely painful. He wanted to ask them: Why were you so deeply touched, then, why did you cry, why did you burst into tears, why did you vote me your gratitude, why does the command bear the expenses? Why?

Wearily he took the paper from the rack and the carbon, and when they reached Tchulimskaya, where red balls of

cheese piled into huge pyramids waited on the platform to be loaded on the train, he turned to Cornet Lange and said to him, with a bloodless and ashen-grey weariness, sourly and with a bitter taste in his mouth:

"A little more material, if you please —I don't need Filatov—Only the bare facts—There won't be any more editorials in my paper—"

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE *Trans-Siberian News* was, of course, published every day, but there were no editorials in it, nor any personal views. It contained only the official *communiqués* and brief reports of great events. The Russian papers wrote that the Central Powers were again short of money, that they had again called upon the populace to contribute to war loans, that the newspapers were full of proclamations—

He wrote that the flame of sacrifice had again flared up at home, everybody was rushing to lay his coppers or gold upon the holiest of altars—Then he crossed it all out, took a new sheet, and wrote down dryly, simply that, at home, a new war loan had been issued.

Days and weeks passed by and the train was still rolling on. He would have liked to write that "the tear-laden wagon of pain is carrying us towards an unknown destiny." He would have liked to write that "the invisible telegraph of remembrance is transmitting the messages of our souls to our dear ones at home." But he did not put these down, and everything became dreary and colourless in him, just like the infinite and mortally monotonous Siberian steppe.

Joseph Body came often to visit him, and he complained to him about Kovács and Lieutenant Gotthilf. He told him that Kovács had not thought that the cradle on the shores of the Amur was accurate and that Gotthilf had objected on religious and ethnographical grounds. But, he said, he had not thought of religions, he had merely wanted to spread a purple canopy over their heads, over the heads of all of them; but of course, one couldn't do that.

Joseph Body answered that he should have known that in advance; the soil would never make any extraordinary changes in the fruit, the man-tree would bear the same kind of fruit always and everywhere. Hadn't he been right? asked Body. The light veil of suffering and pain was already beginning to be threadbare, it was thinning, and the torments and grief were trickling off the men.

They had already been on their way for two weeks, and their amazement grew from station to station. Warm water awaited them everywhere and there were restaurants even at the smaller stations. The restaurants sold carbonated water in siphon bottles, and Dutch and French sardines, sausages, sweets, liqueurs, cheese, cold roasts. They had glimpses of large cities; high factory chimneys rose above them. The metal-covered roofs reflected the sun-rays, and tram-cars tinkled on wide avenues. Siberian tram-cars. And Mustafimoff said that Irkutsk was even more beautiful than Omsk. Mustafimoff also imparted to them the information that there was a university in Irkutsk. Mustafimoff knew it because he had sold pretzels near the University for years. Many argued that the Siberian pretzel was different from the one at home, it was not even salted, but this did not essentially alter the fact that the geography books and the cheap novels at home had never even mentioned that there was a Philharmonic Society in Irkutsk and that automatic machines at the Omsk station sold chocolate and *Eau de Cologne*. And why had travellers never mentioned that particular machine at the station of Novo-Nikolayevsk which looked like a cock and which, when you put a kopeck in the slot, crowed and laid a chocolate egg? Of course, not every mountain might be called Mátra but, from a distance, these mountains looked blue, too, and the stations all resembled the stations at home. There were exits, here, too, and the tickets were collected when one left the platform, and the station-masters always saluted the trains. That the station-masters' salute was different from theirs? That they put chopped meat in the rolled pancakes and not jelly? What of it? That was no reason to shoot at each other. And why did the geography books make a secret of the fact that

Tchurin sold pastel crayons and that Faber 2B pencils were on sale at all of his branch stores throughout Siberia?

There were, of course, the Dutchmen. It was in their interest to deny the existence of *this* Siberia. Most probably they were the people responsible for all these false rumours, for all these cheap novels, for all these lurid jackets. They had a consulate in every village, and machines all over Siberia, and were collecting all the milk the steppes produced. Thousands of Dutch barrels stood at the stations full of salted butter, and there were gigantic pyramids of red Dutch cheese. That was where Siberia got her reputation. The trees were decorated with green leaves, silky grass waved on the fields, and gentle breezes came from the woods. Siberia is not analogous with wickedness: that is the product of a Central Office somewhere. It is not the product of the earth, nor of the air, it steals out of evil documents upon the Siberian countryside, the exiles, the conscript labour, all the rest of it.

Why didn't they say anything about the gentle sunshine that permeated Irkutsk in the middle of September, about the fact that they could not get off the train until the Vladivostok express, ten minutes late, arrived, about the excitedly scurrying porters, about the rice-cakes, which tasted and looked precisely like the rice-cakes at home? . . .

Mustafimoff cried and his family cried when they met at the station of Irkutsk, the telegram had been punctually delivered in the small Tatar village; why didn't they teach that?

Little sailing-boats darted hither and thither on the River Angara. They were given a full day's rest after the two weeks' journey. They gazed at the passengers on the Vladivostok express; there was a slender Russian girl in a light silk jumper among them, she was having her breakfast in the dining-car and she reached absent-mindedly for a bottle of sauce—

He realized that the hero of his boyhood, Michael Strogoff, had played a trick on him. He was disappointed. Michael Strogoff, the famous and intrepid traveller, had been brave enough to go to Irkutsk! And now they were

here, in Irkutsk, just like Michael Strogoff, and yet this was only the half-way mark of their journey. The next morning, at nine-thirty sharp, they would continue their journey from Irkutsk toward the mysterious East. Yes, the East—yes—They had to turn their watches forward, that was all, and that was all the fuss they made about it—But nobody spoke of the rice-cakes. And then the wild races of Asia. A Buriat lady was walking on the platform, and she looked at the prisoners through a lorgnette. She was walking nonchalantly with a lorgnette and in silk stockings, and her dear husband owned a printing works in Irkutsk, and they printed picture cards, and there was a wild nomad Buriat horseman on the picture cards, and the Buriat on the picture card was aiming at a hawk with a bow—The prisoners bought these picture cards at the news stall in the restaurant and sent them home. These picture cards bought the Buriat lady a lorgnette and silk stockings, and, at home, they would be gazing with trembling horror at the wild Buriat horseman whose fantastic bow the Irkutsk photographer had borrowed from the property room of the local theatre on his word of honour, leaving a deposit of ten roubles . . .

Mustafimoff returned punctually the next morning, and at nine-thirty they started for the famous Lake Baikal. Mustafimoff waved his hand to his family and assured them that on his way back he would again stay there for a day. He was just escorting the captive gentlemen to the Yellow Sea, just beyond the Baikal. But he would be back soon, at the most four weeks. He would wire the exact time of his arrival.

Tensely they waited for something to happen. Something extraordinary, a peculiarly shaped mountain, anything exotic. But all they saw were tired men driving tired horses, worn women gazing at the train rolling by, a peasant girl or two turning after the train and sending after them a vague smile.

Day after day and night after night the train rolled on, and the thousands of miles refreshed with no exotic vision their eyes that subconsciously yearned for something fantastic.

Telegraph-poles along the road, church steeples and factory chimneys in the cities, and, at night, the flames of burning forests. They knew that that was the recognised method of conquering the vast Siberian territories for the plough, and they grew accustomed to it. In Manchurian station-restaurants, they cursed the waiter in Hungarian if he dared bring their demi-tasse cold, and the orders of the day never forgot to mention at what stations the train's official daily, the *Trans-Siberian News*, would be published.

In one Manchurian city they were permitted to go sight-seeing, the train was to stop there for three hours. At last something out of the ordinary! There were rickshaws at the station, side by side with hansom-cabs. Light small vehicles made of cane and drawn by Chinese. He hired one. The Chinese looked at him. He motioned to him—anywhere, just up and down the streets. The Chinaman smiled and began to dart with him towards the city. He enjoyed the curious motion, the half-naked Chinaman's prancing gallop.

Suddenly the Chinese stopped in front of a large shop. He looked at him questioningly.

The Chinaman grinned and pointed atthe shop-window:

"Paprika," he said, in correct Hungarian.

Irritated and annoyed, he ordered the Chinaman to take him back to the station.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE man-horse was hurrying him back to the station of Kuenga. He stretched his limbs in the rickshaw and reflected: "Here I am, a stranger and a prisoner of war, and yet it is not I who draw this rickety old wheelbarrow, I am the one who sits in it. A thousand years ago, they cut off prisoners' ears, or chained them to galley-benches, but now—"

After all, the world had made some progress if the prisoner of war could have progressed so far. He might have been thrown to hungry beasts in an arena had it not been for the accomplishments of humanitarianism. But how much blood

had been shed until the blessings of civilization had— Although it would be a good idea to ask this sweating coolie here whether the blessings of civilization, the accomplishments of humanitarianism, referred to him too. Apparently not, or else he would not be drawing his wheelbarrow now—

Why had he said, paprika? Why? Most probably he had wanted to say something pleasant to him, to cheer him up with something reminding him of his country. It was not his fault, the same people who had misguided him had spread the picture post-cards with the Buriat horseman. All he had been taught of Hungarian culture, civilization and history was: paprika. Just about as much as we know of Siberia: it is cold. That there is coal in its womb, immense treasures of mines, that there are cities there and men and universities and families and lawn-mowers and butter-factories and cheese-factories, and that the earth just pours life upon them, that there, too, are loves and army-contractors and steel-bridges and joys; of all this we know nothing; Siberia for us means only Siberian exile. Csutor's son has left his home: my brother's joined up voluntarily, although he was exempt, just because he met with reproachful looks; gold for iron, furniture rotting in storage in an Aggteleki Street warehouse, deserted brides, queues of women waiting for a bottle of milk: Manfred Weisz, the ammunition manufacturer, will be a count before it's all over, the quartermaster has successfully smuggled two cases of beans home to his family, a sergeant has gone mad, cheap picture post-cards are in great demand, a university professor is deploring the deteriorating standards of examinations, and the first Silver Medal for Bravery, First Class, has been pawned: all this we call, for short, "War." The Chinaman exclaims "paprika": the kings of the Arpad dynasty, and Kazinczy's great movement for the regeneration of the language, and Miskolcz jelly, and Tokay wine, and the Chain Bridge, and the Hortobágy, and the Twelfth *Honvéd* Infantry Regiment, and Andrássy Avenue, and Madach's "The Tragedy of Man," and the Dozsa rebellion. The stupidest thing on earth is to characterize a nation with one word. Then the result is: paprika or goulash . . .

When referring to Italians, people say "macaroni"; and Raphael is lucky if he is included. They say, "the beautiful Polish women," and that means Adam Mickiewicz, too. Of the Russians, they say vodka, and that embraces Dostoievsky, too.

It was the tenth of October, and they had been on the train for forty days. It was a beautiful autumn. At the station of Blagovieshchensk, the station-master was basking in the sun. He went up to him and asked him whether he spoke German, he did, a little. He asked him why he had come so far. For this was already the Far East. Even there, in Blagovieshchensk, the local paper so referred to it: "Here, in the Far East—" There had been a derailment once, said the station-master, and he had been transferred to Siberia. And why is it so hot? Are there no winters here? Of course, there are, said the station-master, in a curious tone, as if he had wanted to excuse Siberia, very severe winters. Believe me, this late autumn is quite extraordinary. Inexplicable. It has never happened before. In other years, the winter is quite severe by this time, But, don't be impatient. There will be winter yet—Don't be impatient.—

The station-master wanted to show off, he wanted to display his literary knowledge. He said: Siberia, if I may say so, is like a tubercular girl. The tuberculosis is the winter. On the other hand, she light-heartedly gives away all her warmth and fire in the summer. She squanders her summers prodigally and profusely—

The Amur was not far from them. Beyond the river. China. The Celestial Empire, as they used to say at home. But all they could see were a few hills, a few glades on the hills, forests—China—The station-master's simile was certainly not worth the long trip.

They continued their journey aboard a steamer. Now he changed the title of his newspaper. It was now called *The Amur Courier*. He reported the change to the command, and, after lunch, it was already in the orders of the day. The orders of the day furthermore imparted to them the news that there would be an officers' meeting at five o'clock. Until that time, it was strictly forbidden to do anything in the matter of the conspiracy. We shall act in unity.

For they were again contemplating some stupidity. Namely this: some of them had suggested that it would be most opportune to disarm the captain and the crew and to escape to the Chinese bank of the river.

Lieutenant Koltár laid the plan before the meeting. Lieutenant Kömives rose to make a few remarks.

He considered the plan a mistaken one. Of course, a deposition would have to be drawn up, in order to give due credit to those who had suggested this beautiful and daring attempt to regain freedom. They would have to be recommended, upon their return home, to the proper authorities, so that they should receive adequate reward. Nevertheless, he did not believe in it. The idea of escape should always be uppermost in their minds, but the present plan was premature. First of all, they were not sure at all whether that was China, on the other side of the river. This was only Manchuria, and who knew what agreements existed between the Chinese and the Russians? To the best of his knowledge, the two powers mutually surrendered to each other all escaped deserters, criminals, and prisoners of war. To the best of his knowledge, there were Russian authorities in Chinese Manchuria. Let us be satisfied with commemorating this commendable effort in a deposition.

Little Táncos whispered to him that he ought to speak and not let the plan fall through. Such audacious things always succeeded. He did not dare to speak himself because he was too young and they would not even listen to him.

He smiled at little Táncos and told him to try to swim to the Chinese bank.

The meeting dropped the plan. With the exception of Táncos, all calmed down and went for their tea. Táncos was quite broken-hearted.

Body was enraged.

At least they should have done it in the best traditions of the Redskin novels, he said. Biscuits and tomahawks. They destroyed everything, even the stories of their boyhood. They made everything dull and grey. They wanted novels. They wanted to be mentioned in history. They wanted their

intrepid attempt recorded in history. To recommend those who suggested it for proper reward!

"Why? Don't they want to escape?"

"The hell they do! They merely want to have the fact that we wanted to escape in a deposition. Why, anybody can escape, anybody who wants to. Jump into the river and swim. When you reach the shore you'll have plenty of time to find out whether you are in China or in Russia. Plenty of time to find out everything. They will tell you there whether any agreements exist or not—"

The boat suddenly turned toward the Chinese bank.

They hurried to Koltár and reported to him the news, and, in a second, all of them stood on deck, excitedly watching the shore, excitedly awaiting what would happen.

The boat reached the Chinese bank and dropped anchor. They lowered the gangway and the Chinese passengers went ashore.

They looked at each other, trembling.

Lieutenant Koltár now commanded, in an unhesitating and determined voice:

"I forbid you to move—I forbid you to escape!"

No one moved. The signs and inscriptions on the pier were in Chinese, the time schedule was also in Chinese. They stared at those. And at the pigtailed Chinese labourers who carried the baggage and the freight. They were queer, those pigtailed labourers.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

WITH the fatigue of thousands and thousands of miles in their limbs they at last reached shore. There was a little fishing village on the Ussuri, that great tributary of the Amur, and there was the camp. There were red brick buildings beyond the village, on the little hills. He already knew those red brick buildings. The Czarist regime had built them all over Russia, these were the barracks-cities. The churches were also red brick buildings just like the barracks. They marched toward the red buildings, with bulging eyes, staring at their future home.

At last the sturdy plank fence hove in sight. Beyond that was the camp. Three rows of barbed wire topped the fence, at the corners there were small towers with balconies. From the direction from which they approached they could see but two corners. Two sentries with fixed bayonets stood on the balconies. They came to a stop in front of the entrance and the leader rang the bell.

The door was thrown open and they were let in one by one. The Russians counted them, they made sure that not one man not of their party should enter the prisoners' camp.

In the yard, the old prisoners were waiting for them. They stared at them with curiosity and looked for old acquaintances. He stood there alone and forlorn, in the strange yard. There was a large open yard in the middle of it, and a tennis court. He was all alone again. He had lost contact with the outside world again. Tears came slowly from his eyes, he gazed yearningly at the door through which they had entered and which was now silently shut behind him.

A cornet with a pointed beard and a face as yellow as parchment came up to him.

"Hello—So this is where we meet again—Don't you remember me?" he said, obviously happy, although with a trace of formality in his voice.

He recognized a classmate of his, a friend from his native town, a comrade from the officers' training school. They had lost sight of each other after the examination, and now they met again, ten thousand miles from home. Overwhelming joy enwrapped him, he was no longer alone in this vast strangeness, he felt as if all his sorrows had all at once vanished.

"Of course, I do, of course—Julius—"

Excitedly, in a hurry, they exchanged a few words, but they were cut short by Koltár's command.

They fell in, and when they were standing correctly dressed, at attention, an elderly rather corpulent gentleman came up to them. He wore the badges of a major, his cropped moustache was touched with grey, and he leaned on a stick, but he marched smartly, in a true military fashion.

Koltár stepped up to him and in a loud voice reported the

arrival of the Makariev detachment. Seventy-four officers, five private soldiers.

The major saluted and turned to greet them. Then he delivered a little speech, saying that he hoped the new gentlemen would make the best of things here. Complete order and discipline reigned in the camp, and everybody tried to do his best to make his fate bearable. He begged them to accept his welcome. For the time being, they should look for sleeping accommodation wherever they could find it; there would be an officers' meeting the next day, at which they would discuss the new problems in detail. Those who could not find acceptable quarters would be satisfactorily attended to to-morrow.

They dispersed and then began introductions, and the making of acquaintances. One aspirant met his brother, whom he had not seen for two years.

He learned that the true name of this Chinese fishing village before the Russo-Japanese War was Pie-Li-Ka. There were two more camps there, but they were all strictly segregated, they could pay visits only under escort. There were huge rooms for the majority of the prisoners, and small ones for the senior officers. Thirty or forty of them lived in a room. Subalterns could not get admission to the smaller rooms, unless they were sick. But that did not matter much, because they lived more democratically in the larger rooms. Intercourse between room-mates was more strained and ceremonious in the smaller rooms: nobody really wanted to get into them, but, because it was forbidden, they chafed at the restraint. There was no handwritten daily, but a Russian newspaper was read every evening. Mr. Grosz read the paper, and the adjutant the orders of the day.

On the lower floor, there was a room in which only youngsters lived. Youngsters as far as age was concerned, and not rank. A room on the first floor was inhabited by Austrians only. Another room was populated by country teachers. He was advised not to go there because it was very noisy. They always sang and played the violin and argued and recited, there was frightful disorder there all the time. The room containing the artists was not very good either. The painters'

room was full of large settings, they lived in a bower. The bower was made of canvas and planks. The first room, the one they had passed, was also bad. It was Lieutenant Schenk's room, and he was always plucking at his guitar. He did not pick out songs, he merely held the guitar in his hand, when reading for instance, and then all of a sudden plucked at the strings just once. And always when it was least expected. Sometimes the ghastly twang was heard even during the official rest period. That room was for Austrians only, they could stand anything. Von Goldegg's room was not good, either. Von Goldegg came from a very good Austrian family. He constantly perfumed himself, he had bottles of *Eau de Cologne* and face powder and all that sort of thing. Only men with the same affected manners lived in that room. This room of Julius's was the best. There was an empty bed there, he could take possession of it straight away. Another bed near the window was also empty.

"I'd like to have that bed near the window—"

Suddenly he reddened. Yes, he would like to go near the window. Not to Tisza Kálmán Square, with his family, not to the Gércz hills, not to see what his mother was doing—he wanted to go near the window in the prisoners of war camp of a Chinese fishing village.

Julius dismissed the suggestion.

I shouldn't take that bed. It's very cold in winter, near the window. True, it's darker here, near the stove, but it'll be warm in winter."

Then he was invited to tea. The furniture consisted of beds, long rows of beds, with small cabinets between the beds. Three or four beds were surrounded with reed screens. There were about ten such reed cages in the room. They called them boxes. He was led to such a cage. Mr. Kleiser was the host there. He wore a silver badge on his waistcoat. He was curious to find out what that meant. Perhaps he was some sort of commander, this athletic-looking Mr. Kleiser, who received them in rolled-up shirt-sleeves, displaying a fine assortment of muscles.

"What sort of badge is that, on your vest?"

"This one here? TAC. Temesvár Athletic Club."

Hm. This season, the TAC meetings would be held without Mr. Kleiser. The TAC badge glistened on the waistcoat, and he could see the yellow hills of the Celestial Empire through the window. There will be a football match at home next Sunday, and Mr. Kleiser's absence will most probably evoke some comment. But Mr. Kleiser will be in Yakutsk Province next Sunday, a province that borders on the North Pole. He won't be able to attend the match, and others will have to be absent also, others with urgent business on their hands. Urgent business in Volhynia. The match will be held, nevertheless, and there will be reproaches because of the corner-kick. But no one will say a word about the long journey. About the journey from Temesvár to the Ussuri. Of course—War—

They drank tea and ate buttered salmon, and Mr. Kleiser carelessly asked him:

"What's the news at home?"

"At home? Nothing—extraordinary—"

"Let me give you a piece of good advice—"

"With pleasure—"

"Don't mention hereabouts that you belong to the Twelfth Regiment."

"Why not? Soldiers are usually proud of their regiments."

"It seems you don't know it yet. The Twelfth isn't much respected here. Haven't you heard of the vote?"

No. Now he was told, in cautious whispers, that the Twelfth had waked up one morning and found themselves surrounded. But instead of attempting to break through the Russian ring, they had taken a vote. By a majority vote they had declared, at an officers' meeting, that they had been surrounded, and then they had voted in favour of surrender. Only one lieutenant had declared himself against the vote, and he had successfully got home, fighting his way through the Russian lines—

"Well, old man, the whole regiment wasn't there when they took the vote. I myself wasn't there, for one. Although —I might have been—easily—It was rather a catastrophe and—"

"Possibly. But here everybody of the Twelfth is accused of

participation in the balloting. Their commander dares not leave his room. He has grown old here, his conscience is troubling him. He has become melancholy. He is working on a voluminous memorandum in which he tries to justify their attitude. But they won't believe him at home. He is broken and desperate, the poor old man—"

"Is this the sort of thing you worry about in captivity?"

"We don't—but—you're in it. You can't help it—you're in it."

The guitar gave a loud, sudden, melancholy twang in the adjoining room, steam from the tea-cups rose in lazy clouds toward the ceiling, the banging of tennis balls was heard from the yard, somebody again rang the door-bell, Russian soldiers came singing home from the drill-ground. His heart was filled with pity and brotherly love for the poor old colonel who was working on a memorandum and who would spend the remaining days of the World War and of his life explaining and justifying that unfortunate vote—

"So here it will be—next to the stove," he said to himself with deadly resignation, and he took his blanket and his wicker basket. He thanked Mr. Kleiser for his hospitality and sat down on his iron bed, which lacked a mattress as yet. For the time being, his mattress consisted of a frame of crossed iron bars, and the symmetrical grated bottom of his bed looked like the window of a cold, bare prison cell.

CHAPTER XXXIX

IT was evening. The humming oil-lamp hanging from the ceiling spread a sad light in the room. Grosz read the latest news from the Khabarovsk daily, the *Amurskaya Zhizn*, then Adjutant Pogány read out the orders of the day.

One gentleman yelled out: "Ventilate!" Thereupon all the windows were thrown open for ten minutes. He put his blanket and the empty mattresses on the iron grate of his bed, and covered himself with his coat. There would be straw in his mattress by to-morrow, at least the orders of the day said so. He fell asleep, but was suddenly awakened. Somebody

was twisting his nose. He was at home, the women were stirring jam in big iron kettles in the yard, the sweet smell of autumn plums floated in the air, a peasant boy roasted corn on the cob. What the devil did they want of him?

"What is it? What is it?"

"Don't snore, comrade—"

"God damn it—Is that what I've come to eastern Siberia for? to have you twisting my nose? Let me be—Leave me alone—"

"I can't sleep if you snore—"

"Do you think that you are the only one who lies awake at nights? Do you think that you are the only one who can't sleep? How many others are lying awake now?—Why don't you snore yourself?"

"You can't go waking up the camp with your snoring."

"Oh, go to hell!"

"You dare tell me to go to hell!—Me?"

He jumped out of his bed, grabbed his opponent's shirt in the dark and shook him.

The other set up a shout. Matches were struck and men shouted at them: "*Ruhe!*"

God alone knew why, all of them shouted in German, "*Ruhe! Macht Ruhe!*"

He calmed down and let go of the shirt. Silently he went back to his bed and was very sorry for the whole affair. He dared not fall asleep now. It was silly to get so excited. But he had come nine or ten thousand miles, he had arrived there broken and tired mentally and physically, and when at last he had fallen asleep they had attacked him: Don't snore. And so brutally, too.

Who was he? He did not even know who the fellow was. He could not sleep one wink and when the morning came, he sat up in his bed with curiosity in his eyes.

Some of the comrades smiled. From the boxes came queries:

"Well, what happened last night?"

A pale-faced young man with a little black moustache shot an angry glance at him and angrily answered:

"You'll soon find out what happened. It was a mean attack. Against a weak, unprotected, sick man—"

"But, comrade—"

"I'm not going to talk to you. My seconds will attend to everything—"

"What seconds? What is the everything the seconds will attend to?"

After tea, he went out into the yard for a walk. The officers wore ragged and rather mixed uniforms. Some wore flannel or brown-velvet jackets, their trousers were patched, the collars and badges torn. They walked by twos and threes in the yard, all in one direction, engrossed in conversation, as if they had been walking on the Danube quay, on the Corso, as if they had been hurrying to Hangli's.

He went back to his room and found two fairly decently dressed second lieutenants standing at the foot of his bed. They waved to Kleiser and Kleiser waved back to them. He sat down on his bed and nodded. Now one of the lieutenants politely knocked on the top of the cabinet. He looked questioningly at the lieutenant, who knocked again and asked politely:

"May we—"

"May you what?"

"May we come in?"

"With pleasure—"

The two lieutenants crossed the six-inch space between the cabinet and the bed and stopped close by the side of the bed. They bowed and introduced themselves.

"We have come to ask you, in the name of Cornet Michael Szilágyi, to give him satisfaction for the insult of last night—"

So that was why the lieutenants wore their Sunday clothes. That was why they knocked on the cabinet. But what should he do now? What did they mean, satisfaction—

"Gentlemen—I shall send my seconds to you—"

The lieutenants politely bowed and went away. He could not see either amazement, or surprise, or curiosity in the others' faces. Everybody in the room had heard the affair, yet every one of them acted as if the whole thing had taken place in a locked room, in great secret. He thought that everybody would burst out laughing, that they would smile at him, encouraging him. But no! They did not even wink. He had to go on with the joke. Or, wasn't it a joke? What

was it, then—was he going to fight a duel with Szilágyi? Were they going to exchange shots? So there were other places besides the front and the station of Manturovo where one could die. So one could die thirteen thousand versts from home, in a Chinese fishing village, torn between despair and hope, behind humiliating bars, hit by the bullet of a comrade, for the honour of one's nose! He brushed his clothes and, with a serious mien, went into Kleiser's box. He did not sit down, he was quite solemn and ceremonious.

"Will you please do me the favour of acting as my second in my affair of honour with Cornet Michael Szilágyi?"

Then he remarked, quite casually, that in the old camp at Makariev, the Russians had not permitted them to have pistols, or revolvers, or swords. Interesting, wasn't it? No?

He received no reply because the adjutant was already announcing the opening of the officers' meeting and they had to hurry.

They gathered in the yard, but they did not stand in line, only in a great circle, the *Honvéds* and the Commons separately.* The *Honvéds* had a commandant of their own, a captain of hussars. Koltár reported something to him. It seemed that Koltár had already picked up some sort of job for himself. The captain was a pleasant-looking, tanned man. He wore a gold-braided dress coat. But he had no red breeches, he wore green trousers, Russian trousers. He greeted the

*Translator's Note: The Royal Hungarian *Honvéd* Army, consisting of a limited number of infantry, cavalry (hussar), and artillery regiments, was created for the express purpose of defending Hungary from outside attacks, and was not supposed to cross the frontier. The literal translation of the word *Honvéd* is "Defender of the Fatherland." At the beginning of the Great War, however, by a special act of the Hungarian Parliament, it was placed under the command of General Headquarters and was permitted to fight in foreign countries together with other branches of the Austro-Hungarian Army. The overwhelming majority of the Regular Army of the late Austro-Hungarian Monarchy consisted of the Imperial and Royal Regiments, generally called the Common Regiments, or, for short, the Commons, because the cost of maintenance was, to a considerable extent, equally shared by the two countries composing the Dual Monarchy. The official language of the Commons was German, that of the *Honvéds* Hungarian, and there existed a constant rivalry between the Hungarian Common Regiments and the *Honvéds*. The Austrian equivalent of the *Honvéd* Army was the *Landwehr*.

newly arrived *Honvéds*, then led them all over to the Commons. There were reports again, but now they reported to the major. The major stepped into the centre of the circle and opened the meeting:

"*Bitte, meine Herren, kommod stehen zu wollen*—Stand comfortably, gentlemen—"

A gaunt uhlan stood next to him. He wore a gold-braided blue coat and torn slippers. He had a pair of red breeches, too, but they were considerably frayed at his ankles and aimless shreds of ribbons covered the tattered slippers. The uhlan must have misunderstood his look, for he came up to him, placed the two slippers "at attention," extended his right hand and said in a friendly tone:

"My name is Baron Fest—"

He spoke in a whisper because the meeting was already under way. But this fact did not greatly disturb Baron Fest. He continued:

"Do you know algebra?"

"No, I don't. I always failed in my algebra exams."

Too bad. The Baron became quite sad. His only joy was algebra, he had already reached the integral and differential calculus. The Baron went on talking, but he dared not listen to him, he was afraid something unpleasant might happen to him if they discovered that he was talking during an officers' meeting. The Baron asked him why he was so interested in that gabble? He suggested that they should talk instead of listening to the major's speech. But he dared not, and he listened to every word the major said. The major was just then explaining the status of the newly arrived gentlemen. He expressed satisfaction with Lieutenant Koltár's speech. Apart from certain small matters, which were quite insignificant, he was very much satisfied with the command of the Makariev detachment. One question, however, must be settled at once, for good and all. And this was the question of seniority. The Makariev detachment had attended to the matter very tactfully, yet he could not possibly suppress his surprise at the fact that the question had come up at all. The same regulations were to be followed in captivity as at home. It was incredible that, in certain instances,

it was still a matter for argument as to what the status of senior reserve officers was. The Regulations clearly lay it down that the Regular Army officers always enjoy priority over reserve officers everywhere and at all times. The matter had been correctly settled, yet Messrs. Kömives and Perényi had had no right to demand respect for their seniority. Lieutenant Koltár had been entitled to the command from the beginning, there had been no need to surrender it in his favour. Nevertheless, he was glad that the question had been so delicately settled. He hoped that, in the future, such problems would not arise. Seniority in rank and seniority in age were two entirely different things, that was clear as day— He could not express any opinion concerning the behaviour of the gentlemen who had arrived the day before, although he had been informed of the regrettable incident that had occurred last night in Room Number Four. He hoped that it had been caused merely by fatigue and excitement, natural results of the long trip. He begged the gentlemen to attend to it in proper military fashion and to report to him the decision. Straw would be distributed at three in the afternoon and then the gentlemen from Makariev might fill up their mattresses. The orders of the day would contain instructions regarding orderlies; until then, the gentlemen would please find some other solution. Perhaps they might borrow the orderlies of their comrades, so that they should not be forced to do the work themselves.

Major Steiner said all this both in German and in Hungarian. Then he thanked the gentlemen for their attention both in German and in Hungarian.

He liked and trusted the beslippered Baron. He asked him after the meeting:

"Tell me, please, how do you fight your duels here? With pistols or with swords?"

"With neither."

"But how are affairs of honour settled here?"

"Oh, those! They just draw up the written challenges and then they will fight it out when they get home."

"Home? Do you mean, at home?"

"Yes, at home. After the return—What did you think?"

CHAPTER XL

He went over to Nándi Kleiser, the Far East member of the TAC. He told him what he had heard from Baron Fest.

"Is it true that the duel will not be fought until we get home, and that, in spite of it, you discuss the matter quite seriously? Is it true that the cartel, or deposition, or whatever you call it, is all there is to it, here?"

"Yes, it is. You can't give satisfaction here."

"I know we can't. Why, we ourselves are to be proceeded against in a matter involving honour—"

Now it was Kleiser's turn to be surprised.

"What do you mean? In what way?"

"We have to rehabilitate ourselves first. Because of the vote. Because of our surrender—"

"You are right. I'd never have thought of that. As a matter of fact, nobody here has ever thought of it."

"You see! I am beginning to catch up with you. I am getting familiar with your train of thought. I am already in it. That is the reason why we can't give satisfaction. Am I wrong?"

"Yes, you are. We can't give each other satisfaction because the Russians won't give us arms. We petitioned them for fencing rapiers but they refused our request. They said the fencing course was merely an excuse. They found us out, you see. But lately there has been much talk about wooden swords. Some of us suggested wooden swords for the less important affairs—it would be a good idea if the command would recognise the validity of wooden swords. There is an immense number of affairs of honour, and it would be an excellent thing if we could settle a considerable part of them here—"

That would indeed be an excellent thing. It would be much better than the white flag of peace, much better than harvesting in a merry vineyard, much better than choosing cloth for a winter coat with one's wife, much better than buying a slate for one's boy, much better than replacing the shot-out eyes, much better than finding the girls lost by their

parents when Mármaros had been evacuated.

"Look here—if it's possible—I don't know what the rules are—but if it's possible—I am willing to apologise to Szilágyi. I believe that will be enough."

"Of course it will. Although there are proud souls who would rather choose the pistols than give in."

"I'd rather give in. I don't need pistols. Nor wooden swords. Please—"

The reconciliation took place the next day. Poor Szilágyi was a sickly, tubercular, thin young man. He was very happy that the matter was settled, he seemed to be a man who liked order and hated to have his affairs in an untidy mess. He was a chemist in peace-time, and he now said that whenever he needed anything, medicine or anything of the kind, when he felt ill, he was just to come to him.

Straw arrived in the afternoon. A Russian cornet announced that there was a stack of straw in the yard. He grabbed his mattress and darted out. He carried the mattress on his shoulder and, in his hurry, he accidentally bumped into Lieutenant Székely. No affair of honour followed; Lieutenant Székely merely asked him where he was going in such a hurry and why he didn't send his orderly. He answered that no orderly had been detailed to him as yet, he would not have one before to-morrow, it would be only in to-night's orders of the day.

"Go down to the orderly room, call Steve Pereczes and tell him that Lieutenant Székely permits him to fill up your mattress."

"Thanks, it's very kind of you. But what for? I can fill it up myself. And I know much better how I like it."

"If you do it because you like it, that's different. You may do it, but only if you like it. Because it would not be dignified for an officer to do any kind of manual labour, especially in view of the ranks. Just imagine what would happen if, at home, officers should fill their mattresses on the barrack square. Eh?"

He simply could not imagine what would happen. Something terrible, most probably.

"But if you do it because you like it, go ahead. If anything

happens, refer them to me. I shall testify that you reported it to me in advance, because you wanted to have some exercise. There have been several unpleasant affairs because some of the officers forgot the dignity of their rank. Especially the reservists—"

But he did go down for Steve Pereczes. Why should he get into trouble on the bank of the Ussuri? Why stir up trouble when it was unnecessary?

The orders of the day that evening contained an order to the new gentlemen; that is to say, to those who had been taken prisoners in the Brussilov offensive, to prepare memoranda of their experiences on the front, because the command considered it necessary to acquaint those gentlemen who had been in captivity for a long time with the latest developments in tactics. The new gentlemen were expected to give them this information. The practical aim of these discourses and lectures was to bring all of the gentlemen up to date. If a possible separate peace with Russia should enable them to go home, the returning gentlemen could then immediately continue to do their duty on the other fronts.

At night, in his bed, he decided to be on good terms with Lieutenant Székely. He would ask him how to interpret the orders of the day.

He could not fall asleep on the new mattress, he had gone through enough excitement for one day, he just could not fall asleep. What was it?—Oh, yes—Lieutenant Székely would explain to him how to prepare those memoranda. Most probably there were certain special military points of view and he did not want to neglect them. Well, it was unpleasant, but one couldn't help it, it had to be done. Just like the exams in the Gymnasium, and the exams at the University, and the bar examination, and the exams in the Officers' Training School—He reflected that he had done nothing but take one exam after another. Couldn't he have taken this exam at home? Was there again a possibility of failing? What had he seen on the front? Oh, yes. He would tell them about the son of the Budapest member of Parliament who visited the front on Sundays, wearing patent leather boots, and who liked to put am-

ateurish questions to them in the officers' mess. He had asked them about the trench mortars—interesting things, those—and how interesting that flame-thrower is—When there is a battle going on, who is in charge of the periscope? And what's that, up there, on the parapet? Yes, that thing there. That armour-plating or whatever it is. A rampart? How does it protect you?

And then the M.P.'s son, in his Sunday dress uniform, had climbed on to the fire-step and stood behind the rampart. He found a little hole in the armour. This was covered with a circular piece of plate. It was a very small hole, about as large as a small copper coin. He pushed the cover of the small hole aside and, driven by curiosity, looked out. In that second, he fell back into the trench.

He had lost one of his eyes : and his life.

Was this an experience also? Would he have to tell them of this, too.

Lieutenant Székely would be kind enough to help him—Fridek had most probably got home without a scratch. And now he was complaining at home about his lost goose liver with dates. And where were Jeges? and Répás? This Petö here, in the third box, was a bit of a wag. He had written a postcard to the Minister of War. Once upon a time, he had intended to become a physician, and the War Office had given him a thousand *kronen*, to help him through his student years, in return for which he had pledged himself to become a military surgeon. But he changed his mind, left the School of Medicine, and went to study law. The War Office was constantly nagging him for the thousand *kronen*. Now he wrote a card to the Minister of War and told him that the enemy had taken away from him one thousand *kronen*. He had suffered a loss of one thousand *kronen* on account of the war. Loot. He begged the Minister of War to write off his debt to the War Office, because the one thousand *kronen* he had intended to pay back to the Treasury had been taken away from him by the enemy. And he told them to leave him alone for the future. What did he say to it, as a jurist? Was it correct?

He could not fall asleep. What a stink! Mr. Szekfü was

lying next to him. Lieutenant Szekfü. How could a lieutenant have such a terrible smell? Or did lieutenants in captivity acquire a horrible stench? When he got home he would tell them that he had had to smell Szekfü's body-odour for months—When was he going to tell this? And to whom?

Listen! Someone was snoring! Now he could twist *his* nose—

As if the snorer had divined his thoughts, the snoring ceased.

The room was sniffing, snuffling, moaning, groaning, sighing, creaking. Just like the Field of Wagram in Rostand's "L'Aiglon." But *they* had not voted. An essential difference.

At last, morning came. Cautiously he put on his slippers, his trousers and his tunic and stole out of the room. The weather was a little chilly already, but he stood there, in the yard, staring at the free hills beyond the barbed wire—The Celestial Empire—Celestian hills—Or, perhaps, they were not celestial at all. Perhaps they were fortified hills, between Mongolia and Russia—

Someone shouted angrily at him.

Lieutenant Székely was standing before him.

"Why didn't you salute me, Cornet?"

"Didn't I? I didn't see you, Lieutenant."

"Why didn't you see me? Why don't you take the trouble to notice your superiors?"

"I can't see backwards. I didn't see you, Lieutenant."

"Is this how you repay my kindness towards you? Yesterday I let you have my orderly, and now you don't want to notice me. And you talk back to me into the bargain. A little discipline would not be amiss, I should say. Doesn't want to notice his superior!"

"I am not a child, Lieutenant—"

"Don't say another word. You will consider yourself under arrest!"

Székely was not joking. At ten o'clock, Lieutenant Koltár knocked on his cabinet.

"I am commanded to escort the cornet to the orderly-room."

He escorted him to the tanned captain. There were several comrades lined up in front of the pleasant-looking captain's door. He was again wearing his gold-braided dress coat and

the green trousers. Koltár reported his prisoners to him, and the business was conducted in the most correct military fashion. When his turn came, the captain asked him, with a somewhat forced coldness:

"Why didn't you salute Lieutenant Székely?"

Suddenly he remembered that "I didn't see him" was no excuse. He had to say something else. And he had to get out of this; it was already his second offence in two days. He remembered Army Regulations.

"I went to the yard to do some exercises to keep myself fit, Captain. Saluting is not compulsory in the gymnasium or on the playing field. Moreover, to the best of my knowledge—"

"I thank you. Your excuse is sufficient. You behaved correctly. I knew there was no spite in your action. Friendly relations between you and Lieutenant Székely will have to be restored at once."

The next man in line was the editor of the *Siberian Gazette*, who reported that the latest number of the official *Honvéd* publication was ready. He gave it to the captain, who was obviously very pleasantly surprised. It was clear that he wanted to be done with the business in hand as soon as possible and to lose himself in the *Siberian Gazette*.

CHAPTER XLI

After they were dismissed he shook hands with Lieutenant Székely, then went to pay a visit to the editor of the *Siberian Gazette*, Mr. Béla Elek. The office of the editor-in-chief was also in a general barrack-room, but it was completely segregated by a separate screen. There were four beds in it. It was a little tent which, however, lacked a roof. Outside, the world moved on, prisoners played cards, conjugated Russian verbs, prepared for exams at the Budapest University, practised shorthand; but the editorial office enjoyed a separate superior and feverish life of culture. Noble traditions were nursed in that little box, and literary questions and problems discussed.

Editor Elek was a brisk, elderly little cornet who took especial care of the paper's editorial policy. He explained to him enthusiastically how clever Filatov's latest article in the *Russkoye Slovo* was. In his article, entitled "*Upodnozhia Karpat*," he spoke up for the Hungarians. He admitted that the enemy soldiers fought to their last drop of blood, and reached the conclusion that, at the end of the war, Hungary would have the greatest losses in men. Even the enemy held such an opinion of us. Impossible, therefore, that the Hapsburgs should continue to treat us after the war as they had before.

Then he explained to him how, with the assistant editor, Mr. Gábor Farkas, they sorted out the contributions that collected in the editorial rooms: news, poems, short stories, articles, and the more important resolutions of the officers' meetings, how they selected the material to be published, and how the two "printers" wrote it down, in beautiful calligraphic letters. Only one copy of the paper was published. The command read it first, then it went to the other boxes. As a colleague, and especially as one who had already achieved something memorable in the field of Hungarian journalism even in Siberia, he would receive the paper immediately after the command. The prisoners always waited excitedly for the paper. It was a genuine intellectual achievement and a real and important necessity. The editor hoped that he would also contribute to the paper. Of course, it would be a good idea first to study the life of the camp. There was a highly developed and lively civilised life in the camp. Indeed, an orchestra was in the making; if that could actually come into being, the spiritual life of the camp would reach a very high tone.

The conversation was suddenly interrupted by an order to the whole camp to parade immediately in the yard. A visitor of high rank had arrived. The exalted visitor was standing in the centre of a semicircle of Russian officers, and Major Steiner was just then reporting to him the number of prisoners present. The eminent Russian was a tired and indifferent old man, who listened listlessly to the report. His glance was directed either at a point far above the heads of

the prisoners or at the toes of his boots.

"That's the man we need at home now," whispered Baron Fest, who, because of the cold, had exchanged his slippers for felt boots.

"Why? Who is he? What could he do at home?"

"He could advise us regarding retreats."

"Who?"

"This Russian here. General Nishchenko. He is the most famous 'retreater' in the world's history. They use his retreat in the Russo-Japanese War as a text in military schools. It's a classic. But the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaievitch did not understand his explanation, reprimanded him for his retreat, insulted and humiliated him. He even tore the braid off his trousers, and Nishchenko is not permitted to sew it on again. But his retreat is taught in schools—"

Poor General Nishchenko. He is heartbroken. What does the World War mean to him if he can't be at the front and can't retreat! If he is merely in charge of prisoners' camps—at a time when he would like to lead armies backward! What does life mean to him, if he is not permitted to wear the braid of the Amur Cossacks—There are strange sorrows in the world. A World War is accompanied by much bitterness—

Dr. Waletzky, on the other hand—Dr. Waletzky, captain in the reserve, from Warsaw. He is at home now. Of course it's merely a question of luck. He was an insignificant little lawyer, and he had an office somewhere in Kosciusko Street or, perhaps, in Rzevuski Street, but it just would not make any profit. He tried a lot of things, but he would never have thought that a World War might help him. He had forgotten all about the fact that, once upon a time, he had served his time in the army and had been made an officer in the reserve. Sophie was growing up, the boys, too, were about to enter college, he worked hard, sweating, perspiring; it was difficult to make enough out of that small hire purchase business to whose clientele he attended. Thus they lived, scraping together their necessities with great difficulty. Then came the World War, and Dr. Waletzky among the rest was recalled to the colours. Fat, bald, ageing, Dr. Wal-

etzky put on his lieutenant's uniform. People turned after him in the streets of Warsaw, they turned after him with sympathy and pity. Do we need such battered old men? they asked. But Dr. Waletzky did not mind them. Nothing worse than what he had been going through all these years could possibly come. Why, these past weeks he had often been considering, in secret only, of course, the depth of the courtyard from the third floor. He had been too afraid to jump and to put an end to all this, he had not the courage to leave his unfortunate family behind, although he knew quite well that it could not be dragged on much longer. And as long as he had to die, well, why not have some clean, decent solution? The war was to him like a first prize in a lottery. He had no need to lie now, nor to hide anything, he needed no subterfuges. To be sure, he would have gone voluntarily had he not been called, but it would have been rather complicated to explain it to the family. As it happened, it was a welcome compulsion. He could not help but go, the Czar had called him, he could not turn a deaf ear. He would die somewhere in a Carpathian valley, or be stretched out on a highway somewhere in the Ukraine, and then a letter would go to the widow of Dr. Waletzky, lieutenant of the reserve, in the city of Warsaw. There would be a pension for her, the Czar would take care of the orphans of the hero who had died for Russia, his grandchildren would be no longer merely assimilated Poles but true Russians, one of them might even serve in the Czar's Guard. Sophie would also get a dowry somehow. This war was a blessing.

But it did not turn out that way. When the Austrians organised the Polish legions, the Russians suddenly discovered a very serviceable personality in Dr. Waletzky. They quickly made a captain out of him and, to show the Polish nation how much they appreciated them, they put the dubious Warsaw lawyer into an excellent position. He was appointed commandant of a prisoners' camp in the Far East. It was a fine thing for him, because he could make some extra money on the sly. Now the whole family lived there. Mrs. Waletzky occupied a very important social position on the bank of the Amur, and the beautiful Sophie Waletzky rode for hours

every morning. Her bewitching hair, loosening under her black hat, flew after her in the wind—

Of course, Dr. Waletzky treated the prisoners very strictly. Why, that was his job, his bread, his only chance. He tolerated nothing that was not strictly in accordance with regulations, he could not run the risk of being branded an ally of the Central Powers and of the Imperial Ottoman Army. He had to be severe in order not to be suspected.

He stood there, before General Nishchenko, as if he had swallowed a stick, so erect and straight was he. He looked happy and contented: at last the battered canoe of his life had reached shore. And a safe shore, too. He stood there before the poor, embittered, aimless Amur cavalry general to whom fate, as the last dose of humiliation, had allotted the trivial rôle of inspecting prisoners' camps.

The general said that, on the whole, he was satisfied with the camp. There was order in the camp, the prisoners seemed to be fairly patient, he could see that they respected their own superiors, which showed that they were imbued with the proper spirit. This was most commendable. He was satisfied with the prisoners. But several of the guards smelled of alcohol. How was that? One of the guards at the gate had shown unmistakable evidences of drunkenness.

Dr. Waletzky, captain of the reserve, turned pale. He began to stammer. He said it was impossible. Or rather, it was impossible for them to get liquor. How could they buy any when he did not even let them have their pay? He wanted to prevent their spending it on drinks, consequently he did not pay it out to them. He spent it, rather, on improving their food. He would look into the matter. He would order an inquiry immediately. He would not rest until he found out how the outrage could have happened.

General Nishchenko did not hear this. His thoughts were somewhere in Volhynia, he was just then leading a superbly executed retreat. Small flags stuck into a huge map rose before his eyes, he paid no attention to the worried captain. The prisoners happily told each other about the snub that was administered to the commandant.

The general went away, but Dr. Waletzky was back in

half an hour. He smiled sarcastically, he said he would find the alcohol in no time. Waletzky was a clever man. He offered peace to the prisoners. Alcohol was not permitted to be brought into the camp, he said, but as long as the prisoners were paid so much money, it was impossible to prevent its being smuggled in. He asked the prisoners to tell him where they kept the alcohol. He had nothing against a moderate use of alcohol as long as the officers pledged themselves not to give any to the Russian soldiers. He did not care whether they drank or not, but if another Russian soldier was found drunk, he would punish the captive officers.

They accepted the bargain. Aspirant Aladár Dantsek-Dayka, a long-moustached Hungarian, stepped forward, and told Waletzky that it was he who manufactured the alcohol. With infinite patience he had built a still, and fermented prunes in empty oil-cans. The producing capacity of his still was one quart daily. It was 45 per cent. alcohol, judged of course by its taste only. The cooling tube had been, these past few days, considerably improved, thanks to the expert suggestions of Sándor Novák, clerk of the Treasury. The plant was owned by four men, Aspirants Zsigmond, Knöbl, Dusko and Wankovich. They were ready to suffer the punishment, if punishment was going to be meted out to them—although they produced alcohol only for their own use and for their guests.

Dr. Waletzky expressed a desire to see the neat little apparatus, and commended the magician for his invention. Then he reminded him again not to give any liquor to the Russians.

CHAPTER XLII

He began to familiarise himself with the administration and organisation of the camp. There was, first of all, this Dr. Waletzky, their immediate superior. But Waletzky also had a superior, a colonel. He liked the colonel, and a sort of mild friendship between the colonel and himself was soon established. He used to get up very early; he was out of bed at a

quarter to six every morning. He dressed very cautiously in order not to bother the others. At six sharp the door was flung open and a Russian soldier shouted:

"*Stavai! Smirna!* Get up! Attention!"

The Russian colonel then entered, saluting to the right and to the left, to the sleepy, blinking prisoners. The colonel acted as if he had been returning the prisoners' greetings.

He so managed things that when the colonel entered he was standing before his small wash-basin, which he placed at the foot of his bed. Every day, the minute the Russian sergeant shouted the command, he took off his shirt, and by the time the colonel reached his bed, he saluted him with bared chest. The colonel waved to him in a friendly and approving manner. Very praiseworthy, said the colonel's glance. Then the colonel hurried out of the room and he started to wash. According to regulations, they might not wash before the colonel's visit. But, apart from this daily ritual, the colonel cared little for them. He let Waletzky do everything. The provisioning, the drawing-up of regulations, the confiscation of tunics and caps not conforming with regulations, everything.

There were three camps in the village. Neither of the two others was more than half a mile from theirs. Yet they were as far away, as distant, as if frontiers running between enemy countries had separated them. Each of the three camps had a commandant from its own prisoners. Theirs was "Number Six." " Number Seven" was a plebeian camp. It had only one officer of the rank of major, and that one major was the commander. The "*Baubezirk*" was a distinguished camp. There second lieutenants were the lowest officers, and an aspirant had to be tubercular, at least, to get in there. Of course their commander was a colonel. Everybody there lived in a separate room of his own, a silent, monastic atmosphere pervaded it. The inmates of the three camps hardly knew each other. They could not go visiting except for a very important reason, they had to petition the Russian commandant every time they wanted to go, they could go in any case only once every week, and even then only under escort. The visits were so complicated that those who liked

comfort lived for years in the immediate neighbourhood of a nephew or a cousin or a brother-in-law without once seeing him.

They were trying to solve this problem, the question of the visits, and the problems of bathing and walking; because there was a bath down on the Ussuri, with warm water and various small comforts, but they were only permitted to go there under the supervision of bayonets.

At the next officers' meeting, Major Steiner laid before them a Russian proposition. He said that the Russians were willing to permit them to go bathing, walking, and visiting without guards—

They burst into wild cheers. They forgot all about discipline. They forgot that this was not a disreputable house, but an officers' meeting, they forgot that they were required to behave in a military fashion. For a second, the burden of the long and tedious captivity was lifted off their shoulders. They let out a stormy, wild, mad: Hurrah!

The Major did not rebuke them, but it was obvious that he was unpleasantly surprised, indeed, he was shocked. Nevertheless, he continued:

"But the Russian proposal is not as humane as it seems at first. As a matter of fact, we ought to be accustomed by this time not to expect anything good from them, and it is only natural that, behind this proposition there lurks Russian cunning and Russian inhumanity. They play a mean game with the prisoners' efforts and desires to regain freedom. They merely tease the caged lion. They want to show us the sweet fields of golden freedom so that the taste of it may turn us off the true path which we have so far followed bravely and uncompromisingly. For the Russians have attached an impossible 'if' to their proposition. The condition under which they would grant us the permission is such that not a single officer of the armies of the Central Powers and of the allied Imperial Ottoman Army could possibly fulfil it. It is, indeed, equal to high treason. The Russian condition is that those officers who wish to avail themselves of the offered opportunity must give their word of honour that they will not escape—"

Dead silence followed Major Steiner's speech. They all wanted to shout out in unison: "We accept it!" but the Major's determined voice bothered them. And then there was that business of high treason! So they meekly waited for something, for a suggestion, for a command.

An aspirant stepped forward and declared in a loud, clear voice that he might as well speak in the name of all the *Honvéd* aspirants present. He thought that it was the duty of the youngest elements first to express their unfaltering opposition to this base Russian proposition. The aspirants, as a body, unanimously refuse to accept the Russians' honeyed trap—

After him, somebody declared, in the name of the Common aspirants, that they also refused to accept the Russian proposition. Then the *Honvéd* lieutenants spoke, then the uhlans, a lieutenant of the Imperial German Guard spoke in the name of the Imperial German Army, the captains, the cavalry officers, and finally a *Bimbashi* in the name of the Imperial Ottoman Army. "We don't want freedom at such a cost."

The camp-commandant was deeply touched when he expressed his gratitude for the unanimous decision. He thanked them for their enthusiastic co-operation. He was glad to see that no one had forgotten what he owed to the Fatherland. Of course, he had never doubted what the reply would be, not even for a second. A soldier, a captive soldier, cannot give his word of honour that he will not try to escape. A captive soldier thinks of nothing but of regaining his freedom, and now that we are all together we hereby solemnly declare that we shall try to utilise every possible chance and opportunity. We shall never renounce our rights and we shall always energetically refuse even the idea of renunciation.

This incident stirred their emotions. And it also gave them a cold shower.

Their hearts were filled with yearning to pass the barbed-wire fences, to pass the armed guards. No! they would now never sit in the snow-covered forest, never saunter on the bank of the ancient Ussuri. They had shut tight the door

and locked it, they had locked it themselves. Perhaps the Russians had never thought that their suggestion had been abominable—They had merely wanted to give them a little freedom. But, of course, they could not possibly detail three thousand armed soldiers to the three thousand officers. It was nice of them, quite nice, to be ready to accept their word of honour. But now again, and for ever: mob-quarters, mob-walks, mob-visits.

How could anyone escape from here, anyway? Who would dare do it? Who knew what was beyond the Ussuri? There were Siberia, and the Urals, and European Russia, and then the Front! Or, perhaps, across the Gobi Desert and Mongolia? How could anyone escape? And if it were possible, who would risk it? Why mightn't they have accepted this small favour which would have given a little colour to their ragged, battered lives?

He spoke cautiously of the subject to Lieutenant Székely and asked him whether there was no other possible solution. The young cub of a lieutenant looked at him superciliously:

"Only a civilian could think of such an idea! We Regulars discussed the matter last night, and we were going to ask the major not to risk it in an open meeting. For a thing like this is beautiful only when it is the result of a unanimous vote. Thank God, nothing went astray, but it is incredible that there are still officers who hesitate. To give one's word of honour to the enemy! Unheard of!"

"Bathing, gentlemen, bathing—"

Of course, the doors were not thrown open, and they did not go freely, enjoying a merry conversation, down to the bath. Bearded, armed Russian soldiers surrounded twenty gentlemen and escorted them, a group of prisoners, in close order.

It was the first time he had left the camp for months, and he looked round full of curiosity. He stared at the Ussuri, which was like the Danube; even Mount Gellért was there, only the citadel was missing.

Life-sized puppets made of ragged sacks and straw rose in the snow, as if they had been anxious to see the prisoners of war. Lifeless straw puppets, tortured, tormented straw puppets, with bellies ripped open, formless, awkward figures.

A Russian guard explained to them that, in Summer, Russian recruits learned the art of bayonet-fighting on these puppets—

As a matter of fact, they should have been grateful to these straw puppets—

The Russian soldier thrust his bayonet into the straw puppets and not into them. The puppets stood there, on the parade-ground, in the bitter cold, instead of themselves, the enemy—

The straw puppets symbolised them, and they stood and bled and perished with cold instead of them, and their bowels gushed out instead of their own.

The wounds caused by Russian bayonets, which the puppets had received instead of themselves, were still open, and no physician had ever tried to cure them. The camp surgeon should be sent for—

The bath was as closely surrounded by Russian soldiers as if Hungary had been two feet beyond the wooden fence.

One of the guards picked up a rotting potato and stuck it on the point of his bayonet.

Then he swung his rifle and threw the rotting potato far beyond the fence.

He succeeded, and then he smiled broadly, joyously.

What were the games at home now, and what the successes; did they sympathise with each other at home, did they feel as much pity for each other as he felt for the straw puppets?

Was there as much feeling of brotherliness in them as there was in these straw puppets which bared their straw chests instead of an unknown and never-seen enemy, and permitted the steel to pierce them instead of piercing that strange enemy—

My shivering and freezing, tortured and disembowelled brothers, Siberian straw puppets. . . .

CHAPTER XLIII

They were returning from the bath. A railway-line ran alongside the road and a goods truck was being pushed

along by some men. When they reached them, the men let the car alone and stopped. They stopped and raised their hands to their shapeless, formless turban-like hats made of rags. They stood there stiffened into attention, and desperately saluted. They stood there rigidly, a bunch of pitiable, tattered, coughing, feverish-eyed, dried-up, straw-shoed prisoners of war.

"Privates," they whispered.

The privates wore long, untidy beards, and the straw puppets which rose from the snow were better dressed than these prisoners of war. And they looked at them so longingly, so yearningly, so beseechingly and in such sepulchral order, shivering and choking, as if they would not even dare to fall at their feet, at the feet of these terrestrial gods, for mercy. Thus they stared at them, their own soldiers, their own six-children-begetting, scorbutic, feverish, coughing soldiers, bearded, aged, dying, desperate, orphaned soldiers.

One of the lieutenants told the Russian sergeant that the officers wanted to give something to the men. The privates' guards also consented, and they began to hand out alms.

Every one of them gave the privates a few copper coins, and they thanked them with subservient gratitude in their eyes.

The heroes were grateful for the alms. Humiliated and humbled, they rendered thanks, the poor worms, pride of the Limanova Legion of Death, the far-famed Red Devils, the heroic hussars. One of them still wore his red breeches—

What's this? Have they forgotten them? They fought together for the Fatherland—didn't they? Who is going to take care of them, who is taking care of them now? The Lord who takes care of the flowers in the meadows? Why, he had forgotten about them himself! It had never occurred to him that there could be others besides the orderlies in the camp. Where are the others, the hundreds of thousands, who were captured with him? What is happening to them? How selfish a man is; he had forgotten all about his section, his platoon, his company, he had never thought of worrying about them. These men get no pay? These men get no uniforms? Mayn't these men get money

from home? International agreements contain no provisions concerning the privates? What has happened here? Let's see. We were together at the front, that's certain. All of us crossed no man's land, that's certain, too. Well? So there are castes even here, there are pariahs even here? And privileges too?

Lieutenant Braun, next to him, tried to explain to him that the front had been the Purgatory, captivity was Hell, and the return home would be Heaven. All right, perhaps he is right. So this is Hell. All right, let's think that we've died already and—that this is Hell. Of course, it is a debatable point whether there is salmon in Hell and pineapple preserves and whether they prepare philharmonic orchestras in Hell—but: are there distinctions even in Hell?

They got home and he could not forget the sight of the privates. He could not shake it off, chase it away, scratch it out of his skull. Where were the hundreds of thousands not interned in camps, and if they were in camps, how did those camps look if those who were out of them were—were—were dying like leprous beggars?

Why didn't the papers at home cry to Heaven, why didn't the children parade before Parliament? What was going on at home, anyway? He remembered that, in another room, a Budapest paper was secretly circulated among the prisoners. It was sent to a captain, the paper was sewed into the sleeve of a tunic. All the editorials should write about this, all the crusaders—what had they to say about it?

He got the paper in the editorial offices of the *Siberian Gazette*.

He read it greedily.

. . . Revival of "The Gyurkovits Girls"—The new operetta had scored a great success—It is a pleasantly entertaining piece—Its title, "Let's Bet"'—An energetic editorial —A genuine "opposition" editorial—We demand that the Delegations should be called together at once—The paper pointed out, with great satisfaction, that the Polish Club was also for the Delegations—And the Lower Austrians, too —More, even the Christian-Socialist Labour Party—Baron Ambrózy has been appointed—Official *Communiqués*—

Successful skirmishes near Korytnitza—

"Officers' meeting!"

What do they want now? Again an officers' meeting? So soon? Someone must have reported that sorry sight to the major. Now they are going to discuss how they can help them. Because they must be helped somehow. We must wire home, we must beg the government to do something about it, we must enlighten them as to what is going on here. Let the Central Powers get together, and their noble ally, the Ottoman Empire, too, because this cannot be tolerated. They recite poems at home about the "little soldier," and the "old reservist;" he still remembers them, they throw the spotlight at them in the theatres and the cabarets, at the tenor, the third-rate tenor dressed up as a private, and then the spectators leap to their feet and cheer. Now the private is here.

Major Steiner appeared with a black crape band on his arm. In a trembling voice he reported to the officers' meeting the sad news that the Emperor had died. He had just received the news, in an official letter from the Russian command at Khabarovsk. They had known it for several days, but, as long as it had not been authenticated, they had not wanted to alarm us. But now it was no longer doubtful.

Major Steiner informed them that there would be six weeks' mourning in the camp for the dead Emperor and since there were no detailed reports from home, he would talk over with the commandants of the other camps exactly what the next step should be. If he were asked he would say that the next step should be swearing allegiance to the new Emperor.

At home, with his family, the old Emperor Francis Joseph, had always been held in a curious sort of reverence. His father had loved to tell enthusiastic and touching stories about the Emperor and his mother had always spoken of Princess Sophie and Empress Elizabeth as if they had been members of the family. The death of the Emperor came to him as a blow. As soon as the major said that they would swear allegiance to the new Emperor, they all burst out:

"Long live the Emperor!"

It seemed to him that these men were forgetting them-

selves. It was not necessary to cheer so lustily. They would have had plenty of time to boast of their knowledge of history after the mourning period. The ovation was not nice, and it was not nice of Major Steiner to shout with them. They would have had time to do it after the requiem which, they said, also would be held in the camp chapel.

Until now, he had never been curious to find out where the tea-water was heated, whence came the dinner, whence came George, and all the other lively and good-humoured boys who served them. They brought water for his wash-basin in the morning, polished his shoes, brought him dinner, swept the rooms, cleaned the windows, washed his laundry, darned his socks. He had never stopped to consider who had done all this for him; he had found it quite natural that he had had all the comfort possible, that everything had been brought, as it were, to him. Where all this had come from, who had done it, and when, he had never given a thought to these questions. It was as if the laid table had been created out of the air. He had known that a certain amount was deducted from his pay for the orderlies, but he had never gone so far as to look at them, to see where they lived, and how.

Now he gathered together what he knew of them. Yes, he paid three roubles a month, and for this money he shared an orderly with two other officers, but there were some who had enough money to have an orderly of their own. Funny little Hell! Then he remembered that Lieutenant Körös was in command of them. The orderlies had a commander of their own. They had a commander-in-chief, Lieutenant Körös, and an assistant commander, an old Regular sergeant, and these two were in charge of the orderlies. There was a large, one-storied house at the end of the yard that contained the orderlies' quarters. He had never gone over there before. The house had only one big room and that was divided by a wooden wall across the middle. In one half of the big room lived the orderlies, the other half had a separate entrance. This was a room-of-all-work, a sort of common-room, where they, the officers, stayed while their quarters were being put into order. There were maps on the

walls, chairs and tables, foreign language-courses were held here, and on Sundays and holidays the room was transformed into a church. The chaplain performed services here. There was a small raised platform at one end that was the altar. On weekdays, the altar was curtained. On weekdays, there were profane conversations and discussions in the room.

He wanted to cross this room to get to the orderlies' room. There was a little door in the wooden wall and beyond the door there were the orderlies.

He walked across the room where they conjugated verbs and jotted shorthand signs on a big blackboard. In one corner, a hussar cornet was teaching a Tyrolese yager captain how to darn; near the window, Ervin Lang, artist, was instructing several gentlemen in the intricate art of drawing. Through the window they could see the barbed-wire fences, and the little raised platform at the corner of the fence, and the armed Russian sentry. He was the model and they were all drawing him. They were very industrious.

"*Habt Acht!* Attention!"

The order rent the air. All looked in the direction from which the order came.

Something must have happened beneath the map, because a yager captain was standing at attention before another yager captain, a black-bearded giant.

The yager captain stood there meekly and his comrade went on shouting at the top of his voice:

"Be careful, you! Don't forget I'm your senior! Remember that once and for all!"

The shouting captain calmed down, ordered the other to stand easy, and continued in a quiet tone:

"Well, then, don't you forget that I can never argue with you. I can only teach you. Consequently, don't interrupt me. I shall repeat to you now how I should have led this attack on the Italian front, and I warn you to listen to me, because you will have to repeat it after me. This is not gabbling in a *café*, this is instruction, and some day you will be very grateful for it."

The senior yager now thrust his hand into his pocket,

pulled out a little flag attached to a pin and stuck it in the map. Then he said:

"Now look here, comrade—"

CHAPTER XLIV

No, he did not want to visit the orderlies any more. Not that day, anyway. Queer thing, this affair between the two yager captains. The boxes were already discussing the incident. It was a custom in the camp to mark the fronts, according to the war bulletins, with little flags, on the maps hanging in the common-room. Flags displaying the Italian national colours marked the Italian front, and little Hungarian, Austrian, and German flags indicated the Austro-Hungarian and German armies. Everywhere there were two rows of flags facing each other. The Imperial Germans had a map of the western front and one of the Russian front, too. These two yagers were Tyrolese: they were interested in the Italian front only. They were explaining it to each other, debating excitedly. They shook their heads whenever the General Staff evacuated some insignificant little knoll. Wouldn't it have been better to hold on to it? The evacuation might lead to serious consequences. They would have liked to warn the General Staff against making careless moves. The senior captain was explaining to his comrade the importance of the latest moves and the other one, who had most probably received his captain's commission three weeks after him, had interrupted him. That was why the senior flew into a rage. How could anyone be so utterly undisciplined as to interrupt a senior officer when he was explaining tactics? This was no joke, this was bloody reality. The lives of men and the future of nations were at stake, this was not a game, this was serious instruction in tactics and strategy. The younger captain at last realized his mistake. From that moment forward, he listened carefully to the senior captain, especially as he was commanded to repeat it. In Pie-Li-Ka, near the Yellow Sea, on the Amur and the Ussuri, two Tyrolese yager captains were

eagerly correcting the General Staff.

At home, too? Do they still correct the General Staff at home, too? Is the smart major still parading on Váczi Street, are they still anxiously waiting for the war bulletins, are they still excitedly discussing the retreats and the advances in the *cafés?* It is quite possible that, at home, in the mountain village, after paying the day-labourers their wages, they still sit in the dining-room from the window of which you can see the forest and Mount Kopasz, and, gently sipping a glass of wine, they say: "This is no way to fight—All the available forces ought to be concentrated round this hill here, round Hill 566—God help them if they don't succeed—"

They discuss the hills, forgetting completely that "the little lieutenant" has dropped his revolver and is now lying flat on his stomach, never to rise again. They forget that exiles start out from Darnitza toward the Siberian steppes, that the Red Devils are begging bread on the Ussuri—

Don't they ever think of revenge? Here, look! Let's consider that! Of course, once upon a time we wanted to revenge ourselves! Serbian infamy—Where is revenge now? How far we are from it now!—How far we are from that obituary which was full of typographical errors! Talk about the waterways, friend, and ponder the Eastern markets! And the colonial questions, the nitrate fields, the commercial agreements! How can one be enthusiastic if he does not know what he is fighting for? Or, are there no more explanations? The threshing machine is still humming, but they no longer explain to the sheaves why they are thrown into it—

It's quite clear. The strong, beautiful, steely ears of wheat are now being threshed for the bread of future generations. Blood is dripping from the threshing machine and the wheat of the future is sown in the soil fertilized with blood. When they go home, when the Red Devils at last leave their posts on the Amur, they, too, will hold the bags at the mouth of the machine—waiting for ears—

Those, of course, who freeze to death, will not go home.

For the time being, it is good to hear that there is no con-

fusion at home. A praiseworthy enterprise, the revival of "The Gyurkovits Girls." Most auspicious, these arguments concerning the Delegations. And the appointment of Count Ambrózy to the high post of Lord High Steward to the Crown is positively inspiring. Count Ambrózy or Baron Ambrózy? Better Count Ambrózy.

Mr. Grosz read the Russian paper, Lieutenant Pogàny read the orders of the day, the command was yelled out: "Ventilate!" The cold of the Siberian winter mercilessly streamed in through the little window. The Blagoviesh-chensk station-master had been right. They did not need to worry any more as to when the winter would come. Indeed, it had been a little late in coming, but it was here now, and it raged furiously. It was nothing like a winter at home. The difference between them was the same that exists between a necktie and the gallows rope. Of course, of course, both are for the neck. But there are fine silk cravats and cheap, vulgar ties. The cold is not always the same at home either. At one time it is pleasant, dry, at other times it is wet, abominable. Sometimes it is cold, sometimes it is pleasantly cold, and there are times when the cold is positively warming. But this cold here was quite different. Uncle Hegyi explained to them that the cold was unimportant after it reached 35 below. Uncle Hegyi said that when the cold reached 35 below, they did not need to bother about it. The human body, said Uncle Hegyi, felt the cold only when it was above 35. Below that, it didn't make any difference. Here was lead, for instance. Once it was heated to the melting point, it didn't make any difference to it how hot it was. Or, take water, which is much simpler. Up to 212, it makes a difference. Above that point, the water does not care for anything. Water bothers about heat until it reaches 212. Then it turns into steam. Then the water doesn't worry whether it is 213 or 1000. Uncle Hegyi said that as soon as the thermometer sank below minus 35 they shouldn't bother about the cold—

The cold streamed into the room in thick clouds. Although only the little ventilating window was open, it cooled the room in seconds. In three minutes, everybody

was shouting: "shut the window," "shut the window!" The window was open for five minutes only, in five minutes what little warmth there had been in the room, vanished completely. Uncle Hegyi told them that heat, as such, had no weight, heat existed only in the object. If one spoke of heat, it was correct to say, for instance, here is a stove that weighs ten hundredweight, consequently, here is a warm object of ten hundredweight. On the other hand, when the room was ventilated, only a few ounces of hot air escaped. Therefore, it was silly to complain, because several thousand pounds of hot air still remained in the room. He simply could not understand how they could notice the lack of a few ounces in all these thousands of pounds. They also knew all this, and the theory as such was beautiful, but, in reality, the room became very cold and they crowded shivering around the huge stoves.

"It seems," he pondered, as he pulled his blanket up to his ears, "that people all over the world love to amuse themselves with theories. Only five per cent. die; boys will be born after the war too; that's what they are saying all the time. But when a man cannot breathe because the cold nearly freezes the air in his throat, theories won't warm him. When 'the little lieutenant' falls in the mud, when shell-splinters make a dentist's advertisement out of Peti's face, when the son of a deputy drops dead behind the armoured parapet, when the flame-throwers set one's chest on fire, when one has to wrap his broken leg in straw, it isn't decent to speak of theories—"

One more Siberian night passed by, and when he woke in the morning, he went through his accustomed programme mechanically. He silently and nakedly greeted the Russian colonel and got dressed. Then he decided to pay a visit to the orderlies' room. To that other house at the end of the yard where the ranks lived. He wanted to find out about that world. Across the snow-covered, white yard. The pure snow glistened in the sun. Nice, straight ditches were cut in the snow, white trenches. They were just deep enough to cover him up to the top of his head. The enemy could not see him, the snow parapets hid him. In the orderlies' room

there was a huge wooden contraption with three rows of bunks. That was where the men slept, on three rows of shelves, one shelf above another. The unaccustomed visit disturbed the washing, dressing orderlies. The only officer who ever came down here was Lieutenant Körös, their commander. He came down every morning and held an inspection, and listened to the report of the sergeant. It was his business to bother with them.

He felt awkward and perplexed, it was an embarrassing situation.

Why, after all, had he come here? There was absolutely no sense in it. This was not a camp for the ranks, it was an orderlies' room. The air was foul, but the room was in order and moderately clean. These men had clothes, they had food, they ate in the kitchen of the officers' mess, they were paid, they knew no more of the sufferings outside than he did. But they did say something: they showed him cards they had received from friends and relatives who were ordinary prisoners outside. They, the fortunate ones, had escaped these horrors, they were safe in the shelter of their officers. The letters spoke of a railway that was being built on the Murman coast, the men up there were scorbutic, they were losing their teeth, their legs had turned black ; their limbs were rotting off their bodies; they were falling to pieces alive. Write to my poor wife, I am afraid she won't get my letter—Don't expect me to get home from here, I I shall die here, one is certain to die here—We never see the sun here, we never eat bread, we are buried here alive—What they call bread here is unbaked black mud, they make it out of slimy mould, we can't stand it—As soon as the thaw sets in, we'll begin burying; we can't bury our dead comrades now; the earth is frozen; we are collecting them until the spring and then we'll bury them—We shall bury some every day—You live well, you don't know the knout, but a couple of us are lashed every day, and all of us are whipped in turn—

A sharp whistle rent the air.

A bell rang, and both the whistle and the bell sounded as if, at some provincial station, an engine had whistled and

a porter in the waiting room had warned the waiting passengers to get aboard the train. He stood there amazed for a second, he thought his senses had played a trick on him. His heart was beating in his throat. Suddenly a loud voice shouted:

"Train to Irkutsk—Moscow—Lemberg—Budapest—Debrecen—Kolozsvár—Soroksár—Miskolc—Pécs—Hajdunánás—Székelység—Hajduság—Kunság—Csallóköz—Nyitra—Kisbürgözd—Köbánya—Platform Two—all aboard—"

Incredible din, deafening racket, feverish packing answered the loud call. The men rushed at their bunks, crying and singing, they pushed, shoved, kicked each other, grabbing their tunics and caps feverishly—

Then another ghastly bell was heard—

The pandemonium grew louder and the grabbing even more feverish—

Again the bell, and then a sharp whistle, and then he heard the slow, rhythmic puffing of an approaching engine, and its rattle as it passed over the lines, over points. The puffing and the rattle grew quicker and quicker, then began slowly to die in the distance—

The men jumped off the shelves and, with bags on their backs, they ran and raced in one huge, heated, excited mass—

But the rattle of the departing train became fainter and fainter—

They stopped now in the middle of the room, in a huddle, and turned to each other in despair:

"Missed it! Late again!—"

And the three men who imitated the sounds left the room with pots in their hands, to fetch hot water—

They played this heart-rending game every morning. . . .

CHAPTER XLV

THERE are many kinds of suffering. There are categories to the sufferings of a prisoner. It is indubitable that the officers suffer too: they suffer from the prison, the distance, the un-

certainty. And then there are sufferings caused by the food. What a delicacy, for instance, fresh-water salmon is at home! But just try to eat salmon every day, smoked, creamed, canned, paprika salmon, always salmon. Salmon, then, would no longer be a delicacy in the fashionable restaurants. The Amur and the Ussuri simply swarm with salmon. The other day the mess-chief gave us a special dinner. He gave us pork chops for dinner. We couldn't eat them because they smelt of fish. The pork chops smelt of salmon. In provinces of Amur, even the hogs live on salmon. They are fattened on salmon, that's why the chops smelt so strongly of fish.

They tried poultry, but the geese live on salmon too, and the chickens, too. It's cheaper than chaff at home. Most probably the swine, too, are tired of caviar and tired of the pink-coloured salmon, which are kept under glass in the fine delicatessen stores at home. One gets tired of pineapple, too. The Khabarovsk stores send us tinned pineapple almost invariably, one can never get one single piece of plum. But one can't always live on pineapple. This is another form of suffering. Neither do the ranks play in vain that heart-rending game of going home. They live on shelves, like rows of cans in a grocery store. The air is foul down there, they are crowded, and the fellows who, at this time of the year, used to ride merrily in sleighs to the forests for wood, or used to stack hay in the barn, now patch ragged trousers, and darn, and wash dirty linen. But it seems the prison caste system has its pariahs too. There are those who build railways on the Murman coast, those who lose their teeth on the Arctic coast—

They all use some kind of narcotic, they all fool themselves with something or other, they all try to put themselves to sleep. That's why Dantsek makes riding-whips, and a violin of seven thousand pieces, that's why we need the *Siberian Gazette*, and shorthand, and a still, and the French language. And the New Criminal Procedure which is diligently being studied by one group. If they could go fishing, if they could earn bread for their families, fewer people would learn how to write Chinese from the Chinese A B C

they bought for six roubles, and in which there are sheets of tissue paper between the pages. They copy the Chinese letters on the tissue paper, that's how they are supposed to learn it, but not one of them has learned to write Chinese in all these years.

During all the long years and all the long evenings, the boxes hummed mysteriously, and memories of the home and of the front came to life and plans for escape ripened, and there were fantastic conversations about how it would be after the war, and whether all of them would get their gratuity—If they stayed in prison for another year or two, they would get huge sums of money, enough to live leisurely on the interest alone. The better mathematicians spent days over calculations figuring out how much they would get, how much was waiting for them at home; allowances and doles and war relief for the wives; all that sort of thing—

Only visits from the neighbouring camps, and the sensations of the officers' meetings, and the news of the Russian daily papers brought a little liveliness, otherwise deadly fatigue ground their nerves and they kept each other awake with false news: In those days, an armistice was signed on an average three times a week, on the four other days of the week the various armies suffered defeats which positively settled the fate of the war—Yet everybody continued conscientiously to do his duty. They were ashamed when they were caught neglecting their lessons or their drawing, or the novel entitled "Lady Hamilton," when they stopped carving the fancy box, when their knowledge of the French language was not enlarged with at least one new grammatical rule every day, when they failed to solve a complicated equation, when no new ballads were written, when no new instalments of "Akos Acs" was completed. The writers went on writing diligently because when they did not go to the editorial rooms for one day, when they neglected literature for only one day, reproaches were heard from the neighbouring boxes: "That novel will never be finished "—Those who were preparing for a musical career, practiced conscientiously, and at night, while the boxes hummed mysteriously, Lieutenant Rademacher brushed back his dark hair,

sat down before his little table, placed a long plank on it, a plank on which were painted the keys of the piano, white keys and black keys, and his fingers glided dreamily over the silent keys, his face was transfigured and when he hit the wrong key, he shook his head and started to play it all over again. He played his own composition on the blind piano and he must have played it like a virtuoso—The music was in front of him and if anyone did not want to believe the fact he could look into the music, could look into the life of Lieutenant Rademacher.

And then there were blind typewriters, on which invisible petitions were prepared on invisible paper. The petitions were, most probably, prepared very correctly and most conscientiously. They must have prepared them conscientiously because they prepared them for themselves. And not one of them had any reason to cheat himself—

Only the voice of the piano did not soar, the typewriter did not clatter and no paper came out of the roller—Only the piano lacked strings and the keys did not move, although every key was correctly marked, and the keys of the typewriter were also correctly marked. If there had been anything else to that typewriter than the letters written on the top of a table, it would have written as well as any typewriter at home. And then there were the little telegraph machines which clattered and rattled just like the telegraph machines at home, but the connection was interrupted, there was no sense in attaching a wire to them—They were wireless machines, only they were out of order, they had been put out of order for a few years, one couldn't send messages home with them, although they rattled just as the telegraph machines at home did.

The blind pianos thundered no passions, the blind typewriters put down no thoughts, the blind telegraph machines carried no messages. The news came and went at a funeral pace, only small green post cards carried it, and only in German, Russian or French. Lieutenant Almoslino, in charge of the mail, brought them over from the "*Baubezirk*," where the post office was—

When Mr. Almoslino brought over the post cards, no one could ever understand why those at home dealt so summarily with them. Every card was suspicious. What does it mean that my wife writes in French now? Why are the lines so few?

They consulted the chemists, they held long conversations in whispers, they held the cards over the lamp, they heated them, they washed them with wet rags, they dipped them in chemicals, perhaps there was some secret in them? It was obvious that they were written with some secret chemical, that the messages were written in some secret code,—and they were trying to fathom the secret.

When the cards came, they sat down for hours gazing at the green messages. It was incredible how little one could find in them. They wanted more, something more than "Our hearts are full of worry, try to bear captivity in patience, we have hopes that 'Liberation' is not far away." Why is the word "Liberation" written with a capital L and why is it in quotation marks?

After the mail was distributed, they withdrew with their prey to the boxes and stared at them greedily, silently, dreamily for hours.

Here was the card before him that his father had written, and he was now gazing at his father's elongated, symmetrical letters. He reflected that it was foolish to think so much about them; these little cards had no other significance than to bring to him a sign of life. Just a little encouragement, a little air—They had no secret meaning, everything was clearly written out. It was foolish to ponder over them—

He glanced over the card again and suddenly the white window became dim and hazy, a cold shiver ran over his body, he trembled, his heart beat fast and irregularly—

Tears trickled from his eyes and rolled down his cheeks.

Aspirant Béla Kiss, from the next box, asked him sympathetically:

"Bad news?"

He answered in a colourless, wooden voice:

"Bad. Mother is dead."

Aspirant Béla Kiss did not consider it rude to come over to

his box and pick up the card and read it. He did not protest. He let him do it, he let his good friend, that diligent little high-school professor, express his interest. Why shouldn't he read it? They all lived together like the members of a big family, there were no secrets among them. He was a member of the family, too, let him read it.

"But, look here—there isn't a word about your mother in this—Where did you get the idea?"

He sighed and looked out through the window.

How could he explain it? He couldn't make himself ridiculous.

His father is a precise, correct, and orderly man—his style is concise, terse and to the point—his words all have logical connections and a logical reason—His last letter began: "Our dear son"—and now he writes: "My dear son" —He is a hard man, but now he is moved—He writes in a warmer style—And the letter is now signed, "Kisses from your wife, your son, and your loving father"—No kisses from poor mother—She will never send him kisses any more —His father never forgets anything. There is a reason, there is a logical reason for every word—Thus he breaks it to him. He cannot and does not want to do it differently—She died in October, because in the September letter it was still: "Kisses from your loving father, mother, wife, son"— Mother sends no kisses now. She will never again in this life—

"Where did you get the idea? Is it written in some secret language?"

It isn't secret at all. It's there quite clearly. But he cannot explain it. Shall he try to explain to Kiss that this letter is not a riddle, it requires no solution, it's obvious, it can't be disputed—Poor dear mother—He should have gone to see her when he was in Budapest, to see her once more—to speak with her once more—Now it's too late. She won't ever talk again—

He sat down and tried to answer the letter.

He took a green card and began to write, and tears rolled down his cheeks as he wrote down, with infinite pain in his heart, "Dearest father—"

It was just such a letter as he used to write every week, only the signature was a little different.

I am well, I am waiting patiently, I am in good health—
Just as he used to—
But he did not sign it with: I kiss mother's hands—
He didn't need to write this, it was unnecessary. . . .

CHAPTER XLVI

Sometimes he felt as if it had been criminal to bury his poor mother so definitely. Perhaps it was merely a hallucination. The hallucination of a prisoner of war. But then he got a card from his wife, too, and hieroglyphics from his son, on lined paper, and neither did these contain any mention of his mother. Everybody asked to be remembered to him, even their old cook, but never his mother. Well, he had to resign himself to the idea. It couldn't be changed. One shouldn't think of it. She didn't live to see her prophecy concerning her youngest son come true. Because it would.

His brother wrote again. Proudly he informed him that he had successfully passed his examination in the Officers' Training School, they would soon be going to the Italian front—Poor mother hadn't lived to see this.

Otherwise the days were full of sensations. There was at least one armistice every day, at least one glorious victory. Bread was already being baked of sawdust, all the horses were eaten, one day the Russians stood facing immediate starvation, the next day, another country. One day there were no more men, the next day the ammunition gave out, then again a new machine of such annihilating power was invented that its use made the carrying on of the war impossible.

Commander Waletzky was kind enough to set up a store in the camp—and the wildest rumours were born in this store. The buyers were in constant touch with the outer world, and besides cakes and salmon they picked up plenty of news in the city. They used the Russian expression and called the

shop *Lavka*, and the new sensations the buyers brought back from town were certainly not detrimental to the *Lavka's* business. *Lavka*-news was never true, there was not one single instance in which a bit of information that had oozed out of the *Lavka* was later proved to be true, yet every day they again believed, again swallowed the *Lavka* news. Perhaps one day it would be true, perhaps one day delegates from the Central Powers would arrive here and bring up to the Ussuri nicely heated trains and take over the whole crowd of prisoners and start them off westward. And then at every station large Red Cross detachments would wait for them, with tea and sandwiches for the officers, with rum and cakes for the ranks—But meanwhile, before that time came, discipline grew from day to day, they talked already of physical exercises under the command of Regular officers. A few nice, lively, refreshing exercises, some marching in quick and double time, parades, drills and gymnastics were planned. Alas, the Russians wouldn't permit any arms drill, not even with wooden rifles, although this was the thing they needed most.

They spoke of this only timidly and in whispers and they looked at the Regulars with malice and growing hatred. No one dared to say a word against it though, because, by this time, the authority and the rights of the command had been completely developed, the machine was complete. This firm and solid machine which, in their name and for them, carried on negotiations with the Russian command, like the tetrarchs in the Roman provinces, could not possibly be changed. Individually, they could not, they had no chance to, get in touch with the Russian command. Their own command took care of everything and, one had to admit, quite successfully. The Russians accepted this well-developed organization; at least they did not have to bother with so many thousands of men. The prisoners, on the other hand, thanks to some higher, invisible, and benevolent power, regularly received their allotments and allowances and could even make an occasional complaint or two. Their mail was regularly forwarded, the general staff freed from their worries. All they had to do was to obey. There were

roofs over their heads and food in their stomachs, and the well-organised machine took care of their welfare, of the welfare of the camp. They knew that in the skies lived the gods, but they also knew that the earthly worm should be satisfied with the knowledge that the high priests were in possession of that mysterious power which secured him the gifts of the gods.

Even if the order about the physical exercises should come through, one could do nothing about it. You couldn't go to the Russians, the Russians wouldn't even talk with the simple children of the earth. They talked only to the heads. The simple children of the earth were supposed to do what the command found necessary for them to do and, so far, this had always been for the best. They had set over themselves a government, and there were already regulations to break down counter-opinion. The Russians referred all complaints to their own command and, in every case, the opinion of the command was accepted as authoritative. Who would dare move under the circumstances? As a matter of fact, let's admit it, a little exercise wouldn't be fatal. And let's admit it, the command was often tolerant.

How many of them displayed unwarranted rank! And, since it had been disclosed that every aspirant was entitled to the pay, there was really no sense in bringing up the matter of rank all the time. Then, occasionally, the command was quite merciful: an old *Landsturmmann*, and a tubercular teacher, for instance, were permitted to sew on the badges of officers. They were admitted into the officers' camp, although they were merely volunteer corporals.

A little exercise would not kill them. There were greater troubles than that. One should be thankful that one got off so easily in a World War —

The delegates with the soft-cushioned trains and the flags of victory would arrive one day anyway, and then they would be carefully taken home and would be put down, every one of them, at the doors of their homes — They would have to prove that their capture had not been their own fault, and the authorities would listen to the report of the command as to how they behaved while in captivity, for

only those would shine in eternal glory whose lives were without sin, who proved that they were worthy of resurrection —

Where should the unfortunate go who had been exiled from the community by a princely decree? To the Murman railroad or into the lead mines? There was damnation here in Asia —

After all, one could bear a little disappointment. There was not much communal feeling, not much brotherly love, there was only flattery of those in authority, a little servility. Some of them, of their own free will, licked the shoes of the command, but all this wasn't so terrible. Joseph Body had been right: these men had merely been transplanted, they had not been grafted. It was good to be in the fold, it was advisable to stay as they were, one couldn't very well risk the Murman railroad.

As a matter of fact, there was complete freedom in the camp. What did it signify that the officers' meeting had prohibited the giving of parole? They might have accepted it just as easily. And what if they had accepted it? They couldn't go out in this cold anyway, it was fifty-five below zero. And it really did not make much difference why they did not go out. What mattered was that they did not. There was equality in the camp and no one blocked the way of spiritual development. There even was freedom of the press, every one could spread his thoughts without restriction. There was no press anyway, and what thoughts could any one want to spread? There was equality, but Goldegg bought perfumes rather than anything else, while Kajaba spent his money on preserves: Goldegg liked to dress well, others liked their bellies. The pay was the same for everybody, everybody could spend it as he pleased, Schenck, for instance, bought himself a guitar, Rademacher a big ball, Keledi skates, Wanderer a Russian grammar.

The command gave proof of its sense of justice, too. There was, for instance, the case of Lieutenant Kayser. No, not Lieutenant, Captain. His wife had written him that, at home, he had already received his promotion. One morning, his orderly brought him his condensed milk and tinned

coffee, but the lieutenant did not like something about them, and said so, and the orderly, so it was said, talked back to him. Anyway, the orderly made some remark. Whereupon Lieutenant Kayser leapt from his bed and slapped the fellow twice in the face.

In judging the affair, the command was very just. Lieutenant Kayser was reprimanded in the orders of the day, and the command also warned officers not to permit themselves to go to extremes. Bodily punishment was not permitted even at home; consequently, its use was not justified here either. In fact, it was even less permissible here than at home, because the only thing that sustained them was discipline. Over and above this, Lieutenant Kayser was sentenced to confinement in his room for two days. This proved materially that the command was extremely fair. On the other hand, thanks to the confessions of eye-witnesses, it was proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that the orderly had actually talked back; consequently, the command cancelled his employment as an orderly. He was sentenced to be sent away to join the other privates outside. Now he would find out for himself whether it was better to beg crumbs of bread on the bank of the Ussuri or faithfully to serve his superiors in the warm, comfortable camp.

Indeed, he would not even be serving his superiors, he would merely be doing military service. And everybody had to do that without complaint. If he had a complaint to make he could have trusted the command. Through Lieutenant Körös, he could have asked for another job, and, provided his request was justified, and provided that there had been a possibility of fulfilling it, his request would have been granted. The sentence, however, was merely temporary. For the time being, only a deposition was drawn up. To become valid, it had to wait for the consent of the authorities at home.

A great sensation soon overshadowed all *Lavka* news, all events. Mr. Novák began his activities, and a poster in the study announced that the first number of the *Agitator*, a humorous publication, would be published that day. The poster also informed them in what sequence the various

rooms would get the paper. The *Siberian Gazette* published only serious essays and editorials in the style of government-subsidized papers at home, but the *Agitator*—well—it was going to be a light affair, there would be pictures and jokes in it, it would be quite different from the other one. The command evidently took no responsibility for it, for if it had, it would have been mentioned in the orders of the day, and the fact that it did not excited them even more. The news trickled out that Baron Fest was the illustrator. Editor-in-Chief Novák was publishing in it a long short story by Heltai which he had written from memory. For the time being, it would be given to every room for one hour only, but later it would go the round of the rooms again and then there would be plenty of time to read it more carefully.

But some of them could not wait for it, and darted up to the second floor where it was already being read. In a few seconds Cornet Gönczy hurried down, out of breath, bringing the first verse of one of its poems. The poem was written by Aspirant Zsigmond and its spirit was radically different from what had hitherto permeated the press of the camp. Cornet Gönczy stood on a chair and began to recite it:

When you walk in the yard,
Your hand's like a machine,
Saluting to right and left
With sickening precision.
You dare not move about,
For if you stir,
Down they come on you—
The senior officers!
Many are the arguments,
Many the blunders,
But more numerous still are—
The senior officers!
And when the Red Cross sends you something,
Shed tears, poor sufferer!
Everything's snapped up
By the senior officers!

They greeted with exuberant yells this, the first revolutionary fruit of eastern Siberian literature. Never before had the lyre of a prisoner of war sent a poem so courageous and so brave soaring towards the skies. . . .

CHAPTER LXVII

BARON FEST drew loose ladies and gentlemen in civilian clothes in the *Agitator*, and the characters said amusing things to each other. Some of the prisoners said that it was at least as good as *Le Rire*. There were drawings in the *Siberian Gazette*, too, but Maestro Barócsi drew only landscapes, soldiers' graves and symbols about their fetters, and Assistant Editor Gabriel Farkas wrote such poems as:

"*O you imprisoned souls, languishing in the depths of dungeons—*"

The *Agitator* was nearer to their hearts than the official bulletin with its essays; it was nearer than the *Siberian Gazette*, whose publication was regularly announced in the orders of the day. The *Agitator* did not say a word about the depths of dungeons, nothing of sufferings, but they said that its numbers would be deposited in the Hungarian National Museum so that future generations should see how their ancestors writhed in captivity. The *Agitator* spoke of what the men did not speak of, but what lived and burned in every one of them: it spoke of women, there were knees in it, curly locks, women's shoes and women's hats and women's hips. Most of them were drawn in profile; their breasts thus appeared to better advantage. Baron Fest, to be sure, could draw people only in profile, and even then only from right to left. All the women in the *Agitator* looked to the left. The command could not set itself against the unanimous enthusiasm of the camp. They smiled benevolently. Let them play, let them amuse themselves. But it was always on the look-out, it recognised that suppressed emotions, hidden thoughts, were exploding in the *Agitator*, and although benevolent smiles were all right for

the time being, nevertheless, it was advisable to be on the look-out. In Paris, too, it had begun thus. At first they had sung doggerel, then they had stormed the Bastille, then—

Lieutenant Jóni, before he had surrendered his field glasses to the Russians, had taken a lens out of them, and now this lens was going from hand to hand. They were looking through this magnifying lens at Baron Fest's drawings, at the masterpieces looking to the left. Thus they tried madly to bring nearer to themselves the Holy Courtesan. This poor, starving army would have readily bled to death for these little ladies drawn in red and blue, carrying bags in their left hands given to them by the uhlan who was both a mathematician and an artist.

In half an hour, the whole camp knew the poem about the senior officers by heart. A musician by the name of Hoppe was already setting it to music. He promised to have it ready by the next day. Then he would whistle it to them. It would be a certain hit. Beyond the Ussuri and the Amur, in Khabarovsk, the hit of the season would be Hoppe's song.

Captain Benkö, that pleasant-looking, tanned hussar captain, was openly in favour of the *Agitator*. Whenever possible, he liked to annoy the major, who belonged to the Commons. Consequently, he joined battle for the freedom of the press and sided with the editors of the *Agitator*. He said that, from the point of view of the *Honvéds*, there was nothing in it he could take exception to. He said that the Commons were still dominated by the spirit of Metternich. He did not hesitate to say so, in so many words, to Dr. Béla Elek, Editor-in-Chief of the *Siberian Gazette*, who was considerably downhearted because he felt that the hegemony of his editorial box was now broken in two. He told the captain that it would be advisable to take into consideration the fact that, from the point of view of the younger elements, this paper addressed to the baser emotions and full of sensual drawings would be a damaging influence. The captain firmly declared that every expression of intellectual activity filled him with joy, and the younger elements, since they had been permitted to fight at the front, deserved to be

made familiar with life too. One could not always feed them with fairy-tales about the stork.

The controversy was hardly settled when other sensational news spread in the camp. Novák had finished Ferenc Molnár's play "The Lawyer," and the parts were already being copied by diligent hands. The play was to be presented very soon. Theatre: temple of culture. This was a serious thing, the command could not possible take exception to it. The male characters had already been selected, they only needed players for the women's rôles, and as soon as the theatre could be thoroughly organised, other plays would also be presented. One prisoner had "Cyclamen," by Andor Gábor, and an Imperial German officer had "Typhoon," by Melchior Lengyel. All they had to do was to translate "Typhoon" back into the Hungarian from the German. There would be superb performances, so Novák said, and there would be vaudeville also.

Indeed, the command was wholly in favour of the project, and although there were no advance announcements in the orders of the day, huge crowds gathered in the common-room around a poster the next day. Aspirant Sándor Novák put up the poster, but he did not sign the announcement with his rank, but thus: Director of the Theatre. The announcement called for those of the younger gentlemen who considered themselves good enough to play musical or dramatic rôles. Conditions: pleasant voice, good appearance, therefore only those should report who fulfilled the conditions. At the entrance examination, only members of the Drama Committee would be permitted to be present, at three o'clock in the afternoon of the next day, in the common-room.

The comrades were requested to avoid the common-room at that hour, in the interest of the noble project. The chairman of the Drama Committee was Captain Benkö, its members, the editorial staffs of the papers and the organizers of the theatre. Only those would be admitted to the presence of the Drama Committee who first passed the Argus-eyed Director. Decisions would be announced after a conference between the Director and the Drama Committee.

Great excitement reigned in the camp, and they were all trying to guess who would be favoured. They measured each other with judicious eyes. Perhaps Sluka, he is a good-looking chap, although we don't know what characteristics the committee will take into consideration. Remember Fedák, for example, they say she looks frightful off stage, and you know how pretty she looks behind the footlights. Or perhaps beauty isn't important at all. Then there's Goldegg, the fellow whose smile is so affected and feminine, and who always pours perfume all over himself; then there's the model of the artists, that curly-haired, gypsy-looking boy, but the fact that he is a good model does not necessarily mean that he will be good as an actress. Or perhaps the voice isn't important at all. Oh, yes, these are all Austrians. They don't speak Hungarian. That's too bad.

That evening, they were not interested in Simi Grosz's reports concerning the Po Valley, nor in our considerable advance along the Ivka. They stared with glistening eyes into the air, they stayed up very late, no one shouted *Macht Ruhe*, they argued long and merrily, the entire camp was intoxicated, the *Agitator's* free and luscious women were before their eyes, everybody knew them by name by this time. The one with the little snub nose, whose hair was drawn with yellow crayon, was christened Ilka, a little plump one whose hair Baron Fest drew with Indian ink was referred to as Fanny.

The decision of the Drama Committee came as a great surprise. A long, gaunt cornet was the victor, a youth by name of Lakner. A tall, freckled, hawk-nosed, sparse-haired country teacher with a whining voice. The Drama Committee had decided to make him the heroine. The selection of Udvardy was also surprising, they wouldn't even have thought he would have dared to compete. This Udvardy was a limping pseudo-cornet, an elderly fellow with a hoarse, cracked voice. How was he going to dance? He had been wounded in the leg at Brest-Litovsk, he had limped ever since. What rôles would he get? Was he going to create only limping women, even though the rôles did not call for such?

Steve Nagy was all right. A pleasant-looking lad, but, they said, he would have small rôles only. Chambermaids, a friend, a lady of society. Things of that sort. Then there was little Hromadnik. Perfectly incredible. Sickly-looking, dwarfish, but of course, you couldn't interfere. They were the experts, they knew what they were doing.

They didn't care for *Lavka* news during those days. Yes, peace. They knew that. Yes, peace before noon. Or, at the most, before nightfall. Yet, if it had not come for so long it might as well wait until the première.

The heroine, Leo Lakner, they called Leona Lakner; Hromadnik was baptized Cinka; the Nagy boy, Ica; Udvardy got no girl's name. He was spoken of as Aunt Udvardy.

At any other time it would have created quite an uproar, but now they read with complete indifference the announcement in the *Siberian Gazette* of a competition for a short story to commemorate the triumphant fights of the *Honvéds*. First prize: five roubles; second prize, three roubles; third prize, two roubles. Every entry to be published in the *Gazette*. The title of the story to be "The Heroic *Honvéd*." The prizes have been put at the disposal of the editor by Captain John Benkö. Everybody was convinced, however, that Captain Benkö had given the money long before the *Agitator* and the theatre appeared on the scene. Now he would give the money to the theatre instead.

Heroic *Honvéd*, well, you heroic *Honvéd*, how about the women? Captain Benkö gave a banquet in honour of the women that evening, and the lucky ones who were invited feasted until the small hours of the morning.

The commander of the *Honvéds* brought out his jealously guarded treasure, four bottles of wine, and put them on the table in honour of the artistes. On this festive occasion, he drank a toast to the birth of Hungarian Art in captivity.

Later he confessed the secret of the wine, and the illustrious "guests" learned that the wine was made of raisins which had been fermented with water and sugar in an empty oil-can for several weeks. Then came the harvest: that is to say, the vintage was squeezed out. It was a good,

strong wine; it made you drunk rather quickly.

Editor Elek was also present, and he talked quite frankly with Director Novak. He said that the theatre could always count on the press. The theatre was a strong citadel of culture and henceforward they would walk hand in hand toward the glorious goal.

CHAPTER LXVIII

IT seemed that the *Agitator* and the Captive Officers' Theatre would create a new spirit in the camp. The freedom of the press and freedom on the boards would counterbalance the rule of severe discipline and conservative principles. The Regulars would have to realize that, in the field of creative art, the civilians were not to be despised, and that, in fact, camp culture and camp art rested solely on their shoulders. Many of the Regulars regarded the theatre with great interest. Of course, when talking about the Regulars one didn't include such men as Baron Fest, who had broken with conservatism a long time ago and had been studying mathematics, who was now drawing for the *Agitator*, and who shared the views of the opposition more often than those of the command. It seemed as if the theatre was the seed from which the tree of a new freedom would rise. There were fields now where the civilians were the experts, where regulations and discipline could not prune life, where public opinion was unanimous. The theatre needed carpenters, painters and scenic designers, electricians, technical personnel, wig-makers, dressers and, above all, dressmakers. One couldn't very well say that such work was unworthy of an officer; thus the principle that an officer could not do any manual labour was slightly altered. This work was an exception. This work was permitted. More, it was necessary. One might possibly dismiss the *Agitator* with a benevolent smile, but the theatre had to be recognized, the budget had to be laid before the officers' meeting, and it went through by a unanimous vote.

This slowly growing liberty suddenly received a cold

shower one day. The adjutant read a communication from the command informing them that Countess Kinsky had arrived from home and that, in her round of visits among the camps on the Amur, she would also visit this one. She would arrive to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock, and in order to discuss the details of the reception and other matters in connection with her arrival, there would be a special officers' meeting at seven in the morning.

All agreed that the Countess should be asked for a large donation to help the theatre, although the news pushed the theatre into the background for a while. From letters sent to them from other camps they had known that the Countess was paying out loans which would have to be paid back only at home, that the Countess would take messages home, that she would listen to complaints. Otherwise they were wholly at sea. Nevertheless, the camp was burning with great excitement: news from home, a living person from home, a gentle look from an aristocrat woman in the name of those at home! Aspirant Molitoris, who was just sewing up a rent in his tunic, stopped his work at once and ripped it open again. He said he would be a fool if he did another stitch. He would step before the Countess in his tattered tunic and ask for a new one. He would be a fool to sew now. Some began to write long letters. Cornet Schnabel said that the Countess had estates near his native town, it was possible that she knew his wife, and in that case he hoped to get an explanation as to how it had been possible for his wife to bear a child, although he had been away two years, and whether there were no measures against such outrages.

The command was together in full force. Lieutenant Haertl, a little dark Austrian who was whole-heartedly hated by all and sundry, walked among them with a mysterious mien, smiling sardonically. This Haertl was a reservist, but, at the same time, he was the most pedantic and zealous satellite of the command. He was Public Prosecutor in some little Austrian town, and was greatly against every form of laxity and was always for extremely strict measures in the Welfare Committee, of which he was chairman.

An officers' meeting produced nothing new. The commander spoke in brief, soldierly fashion of the great event. He gave curt instructions: if the Countess favoured somebody by speaking to him, he must answer briefly and not take up any one's else time. There would be a dinner in honour of the Countess, and the Philharmonic Orchestra which had been organized in the meantime would play. Every room would be represented by one gentleman. No one should ask for anything individually, because all requests would be presented by the command, and they would ask only things in the interest of the entire community. Everybody should tidy his clothes, and those who deliberately appeared in ragged clothes, expecting to gain undeserved advantages, would not share in the gifts, which would be distributed with justice. Complaints against the Russian command had already been collected and those would also be handed to the Countess. If, however, their hopes should be thwarted and the aristocratic Red Cross lady should bring nothing tangible, even then she would bring something: she would bring an atmosphere of home, she would bring messages from home, her shoes touched the soil of the Fatherland, and for this they ought to give thanks to the Almighty. We ought to be grateful to the Countess for having undertaken this dangerous journey, full of a thousand perils, for us: prisoners in a distant land.

There was washing and tidying, shaving and brushing, and Aspirant Molitoris feverishly sewed up again the rent in his tunic although he had, in the meantime, considerably enlarged it. A few minutes before eleven, messengers hurried to the rooms, warned the prisoners to be ready, and at eleven, sharp, the sound of the bell was heard from the direction of the gate.

The Russian sentries threw open the gates, and Countess Kinsky stepped across the threshold of the camp with the Russian colonel and Waletzky and the commanders of the neighbouring camps, and a few Russian officers of high rank. Our own command, headed by Major Steiner, waited for her before the door. He was surrounded by Lieutenant Haertl, representing the Welfare Committee, the room com-

manders, adjutants, newspaper-readers, interpreters, the commander of the orderlies, the senior officer of every branch of the armed forces, headed by the commander-in-chief of the *Honvéds*, Captain Benkö, the senior officer of the Tyrolese yagers, the senior of the Imperial Germans, uhlans, cavalrymen, guardsmen, and the senior officer of the captive officers of the Imperial Ottoman Army, a Bimbashi, as the Turks called their majors.

After a short speech of greeting, the Countess entered the first room. The captive officers stood at the foot of their beds, in rigid "at attention" and as she entered they all looked at her.

. . . . She was a living woman, a Countess, a woman, with a black veil, in a short skirt, in a genuine Parisian skirt; she wasn't an ugly old woman, she was young and pretty, full of charm, of divine grace, she was one radiating marvel, the Countess, she was a woman, the Countess—

The whole room was suddenly filled with Countess-scent, with Princess-scent, she spread about fragrance like a wondrous flower, and everything on her was from another world, her little shoes, her stockings, her handkerchief, her hair, at least as much of it as protruded from beneath her coif. Her ornamental Red Cross decorations, they were all so feminine, so regal—

She was like an angel who had come down from the heavens, or perhaps from even farther away, and she had a maddening, intoxicating lure, and all hearts were filled with the miracle. Thus Joan of Arc must have appeared to the French when they followed her to death—

Long-lost feminine eyes, long-forgotten curve of female lips, black veil, holy black veil floating behind her, and she began to speak and one didn't know what she said, one just listened transfigured, one listened to it as if it had been a sigh—

Shoes, let us drink out of you, arm, let us rest our eyes on you, hair, let us kiss you with our eyes—

Holy courtesan and holy mother, you are one now, permit us to fall at your feet in reverence—

The Countess smiled, stopped in a soldierly manner at

one end of the room and looked at the prisoners, at all of them simultaneously—

CHAPTER XLIX

THE Countess nodded with that dear, dark-curled head of hers, on which there was that black veil, and on the black veil there was a white stripe with a little red cross, and warmth filled their hearts. No wonder people died for such aristocratic ladies. All sorrows were forgotten, the moment was worth the whole Siberian journey, and those who had the Gold Medal for Bravery might even hope for a kiss—

The Countess nodded, then she went round the room, and she shook hands with everybody, but, of course, there wasn't much time, she shook hands in a hurry, alas, there wasn't time for everybody to kiss her hand.

Then she went back to her former place at the end of the room, where the General Staff was waiting for her, and she opened her lips:

" I am bringing you greetings from home, you brave, unfortunate soldiers, I am bringing you greetings from His Imperial and Royal Majesty who has since, alas, died. Gloriously reigning Francis Joseph I always spoke with paternal love of his captive officers. His command to you was that you should bear your fate patiently and with resignation, and in the knowledge that the circumstances which brought about your capture would be considered with kindness and sympathy. His command was that you should not try to escape, because such efforts only made the position of the others more difficult and grave, and because they were rarely successful. I have to submit to some of you very disheartening news. His Majesty the German Emperor sends you no greetings. His Majesty does not recognize captive officers. His Majesty will again acknowledge them only after they are properly rehabilitated—"

It was decidedly not nice of Baron Fest. In this moving and exalted moment, when country teachers and timber merchants and chemists and bookkeepers and lawyers and pro-

fessors and clerks stood there so rapturously at attention, when one heard with joy that the Kaiser sent no greetings to the Germans, that their arrogance would now be broken for a while, but that we, we had greetings from the dead King, Baron Fest shouldn't have murmured:

"Well, and how about the Sultan? What's the Sultan's message?"

Fortunately, the Countess was standing at the other end of the room and so she did not hear Baron Fest's question. And her speech was over and she was already at the door. The major signalled to them to start cheering, and with one voice they broke into loud cheers, and the Countess-apparition was already on her way to the other rooms.

And in half an hour, they saw her going with the General Staff to the common-room where the tables were already laid for dinner. The Russians had already gone away. They heard that she would have dinner here but that, after dinner, the Russians would come back for her and then they would go to the two other camps. *Lavka* news had it that there was a superb dinner prepared in honour of the Countess. They said they had succeeded in discovering a pig which had not been fed on salmon, that pig would be served now. And there were other things, too; some said that there was also a real cake. Many hung round the common-room as if they had something to attend to there. The orchestra played for the first time that day, they had been practising for weeks in secret. Some of them were anxious to hear how the orchestra sounded. They came back and reported that it was marvellous, the bass viol was especially fine. They were extremely proud of that fact, because the bass viol had been made by Dantsek, it was a camp product. Every minute brought news. The Countess liked the bass viol very much, she would give money to Dantsek to buy new materials, also some money to the camp as a whole for musical instruments. There came news that that swine Haertl had ordered a memorial for the Countess; a student of architecture by the name of Erkulencz, had drawn it—it was a beautiful thing. The Countess was deeply moved, but Haertl reserved the glory of the memo-

rial for himself, and Erkulencz was not even invited to the dinner. They said that they served champagne and fine wines at the dinner, but all this was not authentic. There was only one hope of learning the truth: Captain Benkö. As commander-in-chief of the *Honvéds*, he was present at the dinner, and they could count on him to tell. At last, at about two o'clock, the dinner was over, and the Russians were already coming to fetch the Countess, and then one could see that there was something mysterious about the whole dinner, because only the superior officers had been present and not the room commanders. Only the trustworthy elements had attended it. Thus, for instance, Czernin, and Goldegg, too, although neither of them was a room commander. The Countess had gone, and now at last they could get hold of Captain Benkö, who declared emphatically that they would have to look out. Captain Benkö said that they wouldn't trust even him, and many things were not discussed when he had been within earshot. It was quite certain by now that the Countess had brought huge sums with her, and large consignments of various things, including cloth, were at her disposal. For the time being the announcement would be made that they could write letters and all that sort of thing, but they had to be on the look out, because she would come back. There would be general and special requests, general and special gifts, and he would do everything in his powe to aid the officers.

The Countess was hardly gone when an officers' meeting was called. Everybody raced to the meeting, everybody listened more carefully to the major's speech than at other times. They hung on his dignified and soldierly words.

"The Countess will take home a huge sheet on which everybody may write a message of ten words. She will take this home personally, and post it to the addresses. The Countess has got in touch with Consuls Heedbloom and Conger, who will bring large quantities of clothes and other necessaries. It isn't quite sure yet exactly what and how much, but there will be a large consignment of Chinese blankets and Chinese boots, as well as small things, such as scissors, shaving soap, nail-brushes, tooth-paste, and there

will also be a chance to get sweaters and various other indispensable articles. The camp will also get chocolate, dried fruit, fruit preserves, the last named probably only for the sick. The Countess will deposit certain sums for the officers' orchestra, the officers' church, the officers' educational association and the officers' theatre, and although this is not strictly speaking our business, it is worthy of mention that the ranks will also get certain sums, so that at Christmas time, which is quite near now, every orderly will get a small package and twenty kopecks in cash, also a few lumps of sugar and flea-powder.

"The Countess has given us the greatest encouragement regarding the fact that upon our return to the Fatherland the circumstances of our capture will be most humanely considered. The success of the rehabilitation, of course, will greatly depend on the officers' behaviour in captivity. The authorities will assume that those officers who were good soldiers in prison also did their duty in the face of the enemy. Everybody may rest assured that the command has his interests at heart, consequently it is useless for anybody to try to escape and thus attempt to prove that he tried his hardest to get away, and that it was not his fault that he was captured. Await calmly the liberating peace which, the Countess has told us in great secret, is not far away. I cannot say anything more about this just at the moment, but I hope this will be satisfactory to the gentlemen.

"The Countess furthermore permitted us to submit to her a few general requests, but only such as are in the interest of the entire camp, and only three at the most. The command will, of course, utilize this opportunity, and we shall decide at this meeting what those requests shall be.

"Over and above all this, the Countess will distribute loans. But I warn you, don't borrow too much because your family will have to pay it back. At the latest, these loans will have to be repaid upon our return home. Take care, therefore, and those who do not absolutely need it, should not ask for a loan. The sum is limited, and don't forget there are many prisoners who are in an even worse plight than we are. As far as I am concerned, I consider that fifty roubles should be

the maximum amount.

"The Countess will soon be back from the other camps, and it is possible that we shall have to submit our requests to-day. Therefore, I shall adjourn the meeting for ten minutes to give you a chance to think them over. The Command leaves it to the gentlemen to decide upon them. The proposals will be decided by a majority vote."

Nerves were strained to the utmost. Here was a kind fairy princess, and she just simply told them to make three wishes, exactly as it was in the fairy-tale. The mere promise that there would be cloth and American shoes and sweaters and nail-brushes and help for the theatre was wonderful enough, but to make three wishes which were in the interest of the entire camp, to wish for that which they most wanted, —What could they wish for when day after day one went to bed with heavier and heavier heart and more and more pain, when one was near the Yellow Sea, when there was wife at home, and child, and father, and mother, and brother? There were courtyards at home and tables and pillows, and there were no officers' meetings at home and no physical exercises. Couldn't we ask for instance, to be sent home? And if we could ask for that, what was the reason for all the other requests? It was as if a drowning man were permitted to wish for anything except to be put ashore.

Some of them, especially a short, bespectacled aspirant, contended that we should ask the Countess to help the ranks. The ranks —

"The gentlemen may ask only for themselves. They have no right to ask anything for any other camp, any other detachment or any other group. The requests to be made must be in the interest of this camp. The gentlemen should not forget this —"

Then we ought to ask a little freedom at least, we ought to ask the Countess to intervene in our favour with the Russians to let us give them our parole, and then we could go for walks.

"That, however, we can do without the Countess. And we decided not to give them our parole."

CHAPTER L

THE ten minutes were up. It occurred to some one that we should ask for books. Major Steiner overheard it, and immediately declared that this request might as well be dropped, because the Countess had already mentioned that the camp would get books through the Swedish Red Cross. Most of them would be German books, of course, as it's very difficult to get Hungarian books, but the prisoners had plenty of time on hand, and it would be only to their advantage to acquire a thorough command of the German language. It was to be hoped that Hungarian books would also arrive. Certain steps had been taken in this direction at home, but it would take a long time to organize. Consequently we should not be impatient about it, for it would show us up in a very bad light, if in the fourth year of our imprisonment, the Hungarian prisoners of war, as if not expecting to be released very soon, should ask for such things.

Lieutenant Jungsmann, a stocky little Czech with a snub nose, proposed that they should ask the Countess to intervene and procure for them more days on which sweet dishes would be served. Once a week isn't enough. The Czechs especially who, at home, were used to the famous Czech *knödels*, suffered a lot from too much fish. He didn't want to make a national question out of it, therefore it was not absolutely important that there should be *knödels;* nevertheless, it was the least they could ask. Dessert should be served at least twice a week, and if he might express his wish, he would suggest that one of the two dessert days should be devoted to *knödels*.—

All of us were suddenly filled with nausea for salmon, and the officers' meeting accompanied Lieutenant Jungsmann's proposition with a murmur of approval. A captain wrapped in a Chinese blanket, whose three gold stars were sewed on even to the blanket, fought his way to Jungsmann and said to the lieutenant, who was blushing with excitement:

"Bravo!"

The proposal was very popular, and one could not take any exception to it from a military point of view, while from a civilian point of view, it was simply perfect. Major Steiner put the proposition to a vote and the first request was unanimously carried. Then followed the second request. After a short silence, Jungsmann, flushed and excited, stepped forward again.

"Sixty-five per cent. of the camp, that is to say, a definite majority, like skating. The orderlies cannot be used to carry water to the rink, because there are several of them who have only one master interested in skating, while the two others are not. Because of the constant arguments, the officers' meetings declared some two years ago that to carry water to the skating rink is a work permissible to an officer, and ever since the officers have carried their own water to the rink. But the time to solve this problem has at last arrived. Could we not ask through the Countess that the Russian colonel should detail Russian soldiers to carry the water? Of course, they would be paid for it."

They all confessed that this suggestion was utterly stupid. There had never been any trouble about the water. People had long been carrying water for money, if not the Russians, then the Chinese, but since no one could offer anything better in the way of suggestions, and because they did not want to make proposals which would fail, this suggestion was also carried.

There was one more request left. Here was a chance to correct all the faults. One last request, and into that they must concentrate all their pain, all their complaints. In that last request they must present the real, the bleeding picture of the camp. All the tears, all the burning desires of the Siberian exiles must go into it.

They felt the unusual significance of the moment; if they missed this chance, it would never again return. Everything might yet be put right, everything fixed up, there was still one more request left, there was one more chance to turn back the wheel of fate—They gazed ahead of them, darkly and dismally, they looked, with tears in their eyes,

through the icy window, toward the invisible barbed-wire fence, hidden from them by the Siberian winter's frost settling on the window-panes—

The solemn silence was broken by Jungsmann. They somehow felt that whatever the officious Jungsmann said would not be the right thing, but they also knew, with the certainty of experienced gamblers, that Jungsmann had a "series." Jungsmann had a "lucky series" and they couldn't fight against that. Jungsmann was "unassailable," Jungsmann had managed to get the upper hand in this historical moment, he had grabbed the lead over the head of the mob: Jungsmann dictated and even the major obeyed him. Jungsmann had become a dictator. This little, fat man divined the spirit of the times. They looked with hatred at the little man with the big belly, but they knew that in an instant they would second his motion, they would follow him—

Jungsmann was already explaining in a superior manner that the ideal opportunity of settling affairs of honour had arrived. The Countess should be asked to take the cartels and depositions home with her. Thus everybody could be assured that, when the time to settle the matter should arrive, his papers would be safe and kept in order, and, in the most urgent cases, they might even receive a decision while still in prison.

Regulars and reservists equally felt that Jungsmann was squandering the last chance, that he was mowing down the last green blade of hope, that he was leading them to the Waterloo of their secret dreams and mad expectations, that they were marching to Sedan with the little fat man, but they couldn't do anything against him.

Sadly and broken and unanimously, they voted for Jungsmann's third request. . . .

CHAPTER LI

THE Countess returned to the camp according to schedule, but there was no festive reception now. She did

not even announce when she would arrive, she went straight to the room of the commander, and they only learned of her arrival when the adjutant went from room to room and discreetly called away certain gentlemen. The Ambassador's nephew was called away, Lieutenant Czernin, and Lieutenant von Goldegg, too, and several cavalry officers. Captain Benkö did not wait to be called: he put on his gold-braided dress-coat and went. Lieutenant Pick was also called away, and this caused considerable amazement, but it filled the Jews with satisfaction. There were two Picks in the camp, the lieutenant, and the poor Pick who was a private and who was permitted in the camp only on account of his illness, after he had proved that he had a degree from the law college. This poor Pick was a very modest and very courteous man. He did not deny that in spite of his fifty years, his children, and his degree, he was still an assistant county clerk in some small village. The other Pick, the rich Pick, was a jovial, big, fat man, covered with freckles, with loads of money at home. He must have had a lot, because even from the prison camp he constantly sent instructions to his various businesses. He claimed to have lumber-yards in Slavonia, and this must have been true, because he had a bookkeeper in the camp to whom he paid a regular salary and who took care of his correspondence. Every prisoner was permitted to write a letter once a week, but Lieutenant Pick bought up the rights to write and having notified his family of this, he sent them off with different signatures so that the Russians should not notice the many cards signed by Pick. An intelligent private was Lieutenant Pick's bookkeeper, because no officer would accept a job with a salary. He lived very well and addressed every officer as "*Mein Kind.*" He was a very religious man, and there was a *koller* on his table every Friday night. It had been made in Khabarovsk, especially for Mr. Pick, by a Chinaman to whom it had been explained with great difficulty what the rich Pick wanted. His table was laid with white cloth, after every luncheon he had a demi-tasse, smoked a cigar, had a half-hour's

nap, and then, just as he had been used to doing at home, he played cards until tea-time with a couple of poor devils to whom he lent money so that they should have something to lose.

The rich Pick obviously lived very well in the camp. All he had to worry about were his businesses. Every evening when he went to bed he read the last issue of the *Primorskaya Zhizn*, which was brought to the camp especially for him. He had known a little Croatian, and in a few months he spoke Russian fluently. He always had money. It was said that when he was captured there were huge sums on him, but he had been receiving fantastic sums from home ever since. Lately, for instance, he had ordered for himself a *body-warmer* from Khabarovsk.

There were no great social differences in the camp, because everybody regularly received his pay, but the gamblers and drunkards were often short, and these composed Lieutenant Pick's court. These were the poor devils with whom Pick played cards. Why the poor Pick was so poor no one knew. Apparently he was very much accustomed to poverty and to saving, and that was why he dared not spend money here either, nor participate in anything. Perhaps he was afraid that one day he might be expelled from the camp, and he was saving for this emergency. He always sighed deeply when he looked at the preserves and the cakes from town, he used to stop by the boxes and say sadly, with bitter envy and melancholy helplessness in his tone:

"I can't afford those things—"

When they made collections, they didn't even go to the poor Pick, but the rich Pick was always visited first and he gave almost as much as the entire camp together. He gave gladly, with jovial smiles on his lips; he was the chief Mæcenas of the camp. He gave for the church, for short-story competitions, for the *Agitator*, and always encouraged those who made the collections.

The conference lasted a long time, and nothing oozed out from the locked room. They couldn't hope that Haertl or Czernin would tell them anything. And Baron Fest

hadn't even been invited. Apparently the aristocracy had given him up completely. But Captain Benkö would certainly tell everything. Once he even opened the door and was about to leave the conference; he looked very angry, he must have got into an argument in there, but then a velvety female voice called after him. "But please, Captain," whereupon he went back.

The Countess came out of the room accompanied by von Goldegg. They talked in French. They were deeply lost in the conversation, the Countess not even looking at the prisoners, who stood there pale as corpses, whose uncertain and far-away hopes were now slowly but with deadly certainty fleeing from the camp, after the disappearing veil of the Countess's hood—

There was nothing to be done now but to go to Captain Benkö. Incidentally, Editor Elek was deeply insulted because he, as editor of the official paper, had not been invited. But Captain Benkö went straight to him, to the reed-walled editorial rooms, and began to talk without waiting for anybody to ask him, which was as well because Editor Elek, having been insulted, would never have questioned him.

Captain Benkö waited for a few minutes, until the box was crowded to overflowing, and then he began:

"Just imagine, I wanted to clear out, I wanted to leave the whole bunch of them, because they began to address me as lieutenant. I said that if I am only a lieutenant then the major is only a captain. That's why I wanted to leave them. But I don't regret going back. To be sure, the Countess called me back. Then they said: 'Let's drop the question,' and they did; but from that moment on they addressed me as captain. It's incredible how selfish people are. Here is that effeminate-looking Goldegg for instance. His greatest trouble is that he doesn't regularly receive *L'Illustration.* The Countess put it down that it should be sent regularly, whereupon I remarked, just out of fun, that what I missed most was red breeches. I don't like to walk about in green trousers, it's a shame for a hussar to wear them. Imagine,

boys, she put that down! She said she would see about it. Then I told her to be particular about the colour, because the Russian colour is no good, our red is different, I don't want cerise, I want red. She said she knew very well the difference, she would be very careful about it. Everybody will get money, the institutions will get money, you will get some, every one of you. Everybody may ask for fifty roubles. But when one's credit is good for more, he may ask for more, provided the command recommends it. They immediately took out a sheet of paper, we signed right away and the major approved. I asked for only two hundred, but Pick put himself down for six thousand, and so did Szmrecsányi. At first it was said that the rankers who are with us here would get only thirty roubles, and even then only when some one vouched for them, whereupon Pick said that he would vouch for all of them, and for fifty roubles. So now they are each going to get fifty roubles too. Sickening that this idea came to Pick first. I would also have vouched for them, there are only three of them anyway. Haertl, of course, whined and wanted everything for the welfare, but I told him to keep quiet. There will be gifts too, but only later. That will be settled with Conger and Heedbloom, the Consuls at Khabarovsk and Vladivostok. Don't be downhearted, boys — everything will turn out all right. I offer hereby ten roubles for the *Siberian Gazette*, ten roubles for the theatre — don't be afraid —"

In a few seconds, the camp was excitedly commenting on the incident; the Goldegg affair especially came in for much gibing. Of course, no one could say anything against the six thousand roubles. They were rich people, they knew what they wanted. Some of them said that Szmrecsányi wanted to buy a fine Siberian fur coat, and as far as Pick was concerned, well, he could have got it anyway, only a couple of weeks later. And vouching for the poor ones was certainly something in his favour. Fifty roubles were enough, no one would ask for more. After all, the command was not so bad. But wait, Captain Benkö had said nothing about the requests. How about the two dessert days?

They rushed back to Benkö, who said the requests were damned silly, but the Countess had been greatly touched by them. She had said that the taking home of the affairs of honour had been requested in every camp which she had visited, and therefore she would place that first. Then, she had said, it had been a good idea to ask for such things. There would be no trouble in fulfilling them, except perhaps the two dessert days, yet on the other hand, it would greatly calm their relatives at home to see that on the whole they were not suffering so greatly.

Gratitude to the command, gratitude and tenderness for the dear, good Countess overpowered them. For the Countess who had come to far-away Siberia, who had brought them the blessings of the sun of home, the soil of home and the fields of home, who had waved before them, for a second, the hope of liberation.

There were ironical remarks heard from some of the boxes, but these were completely disregarded. After all, one could not very well get excited over the facts that Haertl would command more power now because of the gifts, that discipline would be more severe, that the command would be more powerful hereafter because more interests were concentrated in its sphere. And she had most probably taken the ordinary soldiers' camps under her wing too. Of course, the privates would not get illustrated French weeklies, that was only natural, but they would get a few charity parcels, the command had said so, they had said something else too, but—

The *Agitator* announced that there would be a special, extra number published the next day. The entire number would be devoted to the Countess. László Sipos, an artist, was already doing the Countess's portrait for the cover.

But that was not so important. What could the *Agitator* say? Really, nothing much. Apparently it was trying to compete with the *Siberian Gazette*, because the *Siberian Gazette* had also decided to issue an extra number. Most probably both would have pretty cover designs, and a couple of flattering articles about the visit.

The *Agitator* really came out with the extra issue the next

day. It was a very malicious number. Haertl was in it, too, standing guard in front of an iron-barred warehouse full of gifts. Goldegg was drawn in colours. He was lying in a hammock reading *L'Illustration*. One drawing represented a huge crowd of ragged individuals begging, and the Countess was handing them the tail of a salmon. Such things were in it, and no one was surprised when the news came at lunch time that the command had confiscated and suppressed the *Agitator*.

CHAPTER LII

THE visit gave a great impetus to life in the camp. Everybody got the money, those who asked for fifty as well as those who borrowed six thousand. Before the money was distributed, the officers were once more warned that their families would have to pay it back. At the worst, they would have to repay it after their return. Therefore, few people asked for more than fifty: indeed, there was one officer, by the name of Medveczky, who had scraped together sixty-four roubles and gave them, all his savings of years, to the Countess to take home to his wife. Every morning and every evening he prayed before a photograph of his family. He often told them that they had been on far from good terms, that he and his wife had often quarrelled, but that he would devote the remaining days of his life to his wife and children. He thought that his family was in great misery, he regretted the life they had led, he declared himself ready to die if only this sacrifice would help them. He didn't borrow anything. God forbid, he didn't want to burden them.

From the day the distribution of money began, the Russian smugglers were working overtime. They brought wines, rum and conserves from Khabarovsk. The camp was full of money, and one could buy American tobacco and Egyptian cigarettes for very little. They were sold, even on credit, on the instalment plan, and the instalments were to be deducted from the monthly pay. Fine shaving soaps arrived,

bottles of *Eau de Cologne*, nail clippers, sweaters. But this was only the beginning, the command informed them. Clothes in huge quantities would soon arrive. And ready-made overcoats, too. They would not have to pay for anything in full, everything would be deducted from their pay. The surplus would go to the Welfare Fund in order to have money at the camp's disposal in case something should happen. If disease or starvation came they would be prepared.

In these days of plenty, they forgot all about the grave attack on the freedom of the press which had come about when the *Agitator* had been confiscated and suppressed. It was indeed hardly nice of the *Agitator* to insult the charitable lady; she really did not deserve such treatment. That drawing with the salmon's tail was a small matter, after all, but there was another picture, in which a ragged lieutenant was standing before the Countess, and he was staring at her with bulging eyes and with saliva dripping from his mouth. And there was this legend below the picture:

COUNTESS: Can I be of any service to you, Lieutenant?

LIEUTENANT (full of desire): Very easily, Countess.

This was the picture and the legend that had aroused the ire of the command and the wrath of several members of the General Staff. For the command had already a staff composed of those reliable elements who had been present at the conferences with the Countess. These were now always closeted in the commander's room. It seemed they had become very intimate. Two men, however, refrained from being constantly with them. One of them was, of course, Captain Benkö; the other one was Uncle Szabo, an army physician. Uncle Szabo had a long beard, and he was always ready to cure anybody, but he had no office hours. He was always hanging about in the rooms, coming and going, and asking them how they felt. Whenever he saw anything suspicious he was immediately there: Anything the matter with you, my son? He could have lived in a separate room if he had liked, could have snubbed them, but this charming and active old gentleman was always with them. After lunch he always sat down to play cards with Jóska Kaufmann. They began the game by saying a huge num-

ber which they put down on paper:

"Three million four hundred and twenty-two thousand, nine hundred and forty-two—"

"Yesterday I won ninety-four thousand one hundred and twenty off you—"

Uncle Szabo and Jóska Kaufmann had been captured in '14, and they had been playing this endless game ever since. The game was scheduled to end on the day of the armistice, so there was plenty of time to even up the scores. There were vast losses, but the two players were not nervous at all.

Uncle Szabo did not leave his game of casino even on the day the Countess visited the camp. He sat down at his regular hour and solemnly announced the difference in the score between them. Uncle Szabo never attended the meeting of the camarilla, but neither did he give out interviews or speak against them. He cured the sick and played casino with "my son, Jóska."

Neither the confiscation of the *Agitator* nor that queer clique around the command caused any special surprise. It was lucky that they didn't do anything about the theatre. After all that was going to be their source of entertainment.

The greatest secrecy surrounded the theatre until the day of the première. Neither the actresses nor the actors, neither the technical staff nor the employees of the theatrical dressmaking establishment, betrayed anything. They were very secretive and whispered only among themselves. The common-room was closed now, only those connected with the theatre could enter it. They were building a stage there, making furniture, painting sets. The orchestra rehearsed every day, and the rumour spread that Conductor Hoppe had composed a special "Siberian Galop" for the festive occasion.

On the day of the première, the orders of the day were read immediately after luncheon. In the evening everybody would be in the theatre, and this circumstance was respected even by the command. The orders of the day also informed them that the command had raised the ban on the *Agitator;* that particular number, of course, would remain confiscated, but, in view of Director Novák's great services per-

formed in the interest of the theatre, no reprisals would be taken. The command hoped that, in the future, the *Agitator* would never overstep the boundaries of decent diversion.

Editor Elek appeared in his box in the afternoon, and asked him to be kind enough to write a review of the performance for the *Siberian Gazette*. Three articles would deal with the great event. The editor would write about it as a great intellectual development. Assistant-Editor Farkas would write the criticism, and he himself was asked to review the première from a literary point of view, with special reference to its mental effect upon the audience.

"Incidentally," said Editor Elek, "here is one of the three passes sent to the editorial staff—This is yours—"

"Thank you—But isn't the performance free of charge?"

"Of course it is. Why do you ask?"

"Then why the pass?"

"Oh, get along with you, it doesn't make any difference whether it's free or not, the paper is entitled to passes under all circumstances. That's only natural—"

"Ah, of course."

Ushers with ribbons on their arms received the spectators and led them to their seats. By the time he arrived, the room was crowded. The usher courteously invited him to the front row, where there were armchairs only. The others were sitting on their own little stools. Each arrived with a stool under his arm. But there was no need for him to worry about that. There was a seat reserved for him in the front row, where the command and the senior gentlemen sat. Paper slips were fastened to the backs of the chairs: Major Steiner—Chairman of the Welfare Committee—Commander of the Orderlies' Room—Regimental Surgeon Dr. Szabó—Captain Benkö—and, at the end of the row, three large signs: Press.

He sat down on one of the chairs reserved for the Press, and the orchestra struck up the famous march, Conductor Hoppe's "Siberian Galop." Then the curtains parted and the performance began, the first production of The Captive Officers' Theatre. It was "Cyclamen," by Andor Gábor.

Leona Lakner, that gaunt cornet, played the rôle of the

heroine. He appeared on the stage in low patent leather shoes, in a blouse cut alluringly low round the throat, and the way he sat down, and the way the heroine's ankles showed and the way he spoke in a low, thrilling, and wholly changed voice, and the way he jerked his head when he was kissed, when a kiss followed, a kiss—well, the spectators silently wriggled in their seats. And when Aunt Udvardy came on to the stage and began to raise hell in a female voice, rigged out with enormous stuffed breasts, because Aunt Udvardy played a cook, he was simply enchanting. They stared at the stage in rapt attention, and every word, every gesture seemed like a charming, faded souvenir of long-forgotten days. They trembled at the thought that it would soon be over, that the cook's gigantic hips would vanish for ever, and Leona Lakner, too—

The curtains closed to, and everybody in the room cheered at the top of his voice, from the major down to the orderlies who had stolen into the room. If it had depended on them, the entire performance would have been repeated then and there.

"Leona Lakner is an artist, a perfect, superb actress."

"A beauty! Ica Nagy is a perfect beauty. Not even at home was it played so well. It's grand! I saw it in Budapest, but—"

He went behind the scenes, after the performance, for after all, a critic was supposed to go behind the scenes. The stage was crowded with well-wishers. It was bathed in clouds of perfume, and a lieutenant was gazing with amazed admiration at Ica Nagy, who went on talking in a high-pitched voice, lisping. Mr. Lengyel, a fat bank-clerk from Budapest, who had sewn Ica Nagy's costume, stood proudly at Ica's side and glanced at him tenderly. But as soon as Mr. Lengyel noticed him, he whispered something in Ica's ear, who then flew over to him and curtsied:

"How did you like my performance, my dear editor?"

"It was charming, quite charming."

There were tears of happiness in Ica's eyes, and all of a sudden Ica threw himself on his chest, Ica Nagy's fragrant wig tickled his eyes, his padded breasts, his creamy white

hands, soft as a girl's, were on his shoulder—

"I am so happy—" cried Ica Nagy, the actress.

CHAPTER LIII

HE wrote the following article for the *Siberian Gazette* on the first performance of "Cyclamen" in Siberia:

"The local Captive Officers' Theatre was the scene of a glamorous event on the evening of the tenth of this month.

"There are dressing-rooms made of blankets belonging to captive officers. I look in for a second, for fortunately the blankets have a hole in them and I can look through. Thank God, I do look in, I peep with my nose and with my ears and with my eyes, I am lost in the blanket. I can hardly stand on my feet. I stand trembling and excited by the illusions coming from the little hole.

"The smell of mascara and the smell of grease-paint; everything is thrilling, an oil-lamp throws dim light upon many little trinkets—the remnants of costumes and illusion—things to madden the imagination—Heavens—It is the dressing-room in a small provincial theatre—The senior officer of the local garrison, a captain, pays court to the prima donna, to the heroine, and next to them the ingénue glances over her part for the last time before going on the stage, and she looks in the mirror once more. The comedienne plays a cook, she is just trying on her white apron, and I gaze at them, holding my breath, I watch the captain as he stands there, a little too self-confident, before the heroine.

"The captain smiles, his left hand is on his hip, he wears his red cap,but his sword is not at his side, he must have left it in the green-room—It seems to me, through the little hole, that the captain has said something complimentary to the heroine. The compliment must have been very flattering, because the heroine smiles now and curtsies. She smiles just as all provincial prima donnas are accustomed to smile, and her curtsy is precisely such as is taught to little girls in

dancing schools. She smiles and curtsies in such a manner that, were I an author, I should say: The heroine bestowed on the captain a smile that was full of promise.

"But no matter how promisingly the heroine smiles at the captain, the captain would not touch the heroine. Although there is an excellent opportunity to do so, because the heroine now raises her mirror and practises a sly little smile for the orchestra and a grateful nod to the galleries. Heavens —Where am I, in what little theatre, what little town—I usually know about these things—Yes, yes—a fellow by the name of Novák is the director. The Novák Stock Company —He must be quite a new man, otherwise I would have remembered him at once.

"Look—What's this—The heroine picks up a little English pipe, and puts the pipe in the corner of her mouth, and now she lights the pipe and blows big clouds of smoke, and I can smell the English tobacco which we bought from the Japanese through the American consul, Conger—We bought the tobacco on the instalment plan, and the pipe isn't paid for either, and I see in the heroine's left cheek the little hole through which the bullet entered. It is like a dimple, and the place where the bullet came out, on the heroine's neck, is covered with lace—

"The heroine was captured off Lutsk in a hand-to-hand fight, although I don't know why it is called a hand-to-hand fight when they shoot into one's cheek—Nor is the captain's sword left in the green-room, it is lying somewhere in a military warehouse in Zhitomir, and there is a number attached to it, and the captain will get his sword back only after the war—

"And when the captain is about to leave the dressing-room, the heroine takes the pipe out of her mouth—She holds the pipe now 'at the trail', and she clicks together the heels of her low patent-leather shoes made out of boots, and she salutes, the heroine salutes the captain, she lifts her hand to her knot of hair and salutes rigidly, for the heroine is only a cornet, although had she not been taken prisoner she would be a lieutenant now, and the captain wouldn't be a lieutenant either, the captain would be a real captain by now, if

he hadn't been captured—

"The stage-manager rings the bell and the comedienne limps out; it isn't in her rôle to limp, yet the comedienne does limp, because her leg was shattered at Brest-Litovsk—

"And the heroine knocks the ashes out of her pipe, and sighs, and the *Siberian Gazette* and the *Agitator* will say, in their next issue: 'The local Captive Officers' Theatre was the scene of a glamorous event on the evening of the tenth of this month.' "

Several officers disapproved of the article, they found it unworthy of the traditions of the *Siberian Gazette*. After all, camp-art was making such progress that any mention of it should be made only in the most serious manner. Ervin Lang and Kunft were about to hold an exhibition of their drawings. Lieutenant Nagy had begun to carve a box to keep gloves in, and the work promised to be of high artistic merit. Machine-guns would be carved on the top of it, and it was obvious that it would be beautiful. These were the days of plenty, and Mæcenases sprang up. Lieutenant Pick, for instance, the rich Pick, gave Héjjas, the artist, an order to paint his home, his children, and the portrait of his wife, in water colours, from a photograph. And the performance would be repeated for those who had not seen it on the opening night, and it would be repeated for the benefit of the two other camps, too; why shouldn't the men in "Number Seven" and the fashionable audience from the "*Baubezirk*" see how far advanced culture in the "Six" was? Dantsek was feverishly at work on a *cimbalom* and on a roulette wheel. The command did all in its power to help every artistic effort. The orchestra practised in the laundry, the Bartakovics group placed their extra room at the disposal of the Choral Society for its rehearsals, the camp chaplain was preparing a new speech, and short stories piled up high in the editorial office of the *Siberian Gazette*. Lieutenant Krebs ordered needle-point samples from Khabarovsk and was diligently embroidering. The unexpected but brilliant dawn of the arts, music and literature had brought respect for the artists, the singers, the composers, the actors. A pleasant

atmosphere of gentle attention and mild admiration surrounded them.

Indeed, no one disapproved of the fact that the artists received larger rations of the various gifts sent by charity organizations than the rest of them, and that they got them free of charge, and everybody smiled when the rumour began to spread that Ica Nagy painted himself pale and then went and asked the doctor for preserves. Of course, the doctor smiled, and pinched Ica Nagy's cheeks, and he gave him preserves, and a box of dried eggs.

The Regulars also worked in the theatre, they even played small parts. For the first time in the history of the camp, they worked together with the Reservists. It was almost as if the leading actors had been of higher rank than that which they displayed on their collars. Especially the actresses. After all they should be treated differently. After all, it was the actresses who brought something new, something spicy to the play, who awakened old memories.

During the morning walk, one began to hear an occasional "I kiss your hand, my dear lady," at first only humorously, but then in a few days the answer came half seriously, in a lisping, high-pitched voice, "Hello, darling"—

It happened that high officers came over from the "*Baubezirk*," to make the acquaintance of one or the other of the actresses. At such times, the adjutant appeared in the room and politely said:

"His Excellency, General Komma, would like to see Miss Ica Nagy—"

Then Ica Nagy, or Leona Lakner, would arrange his hair before the mirror and spray a few drops of *Eau de Cologne* on his tunic. One day, Leona Lakner was observed to look dreamily and long at a piece of rouge, hesitating whether to use it—

After the performance given for the benefit of the "*Baubezirk*," the respect paid to the camp actresses became even more pronounced, especially after General Komma had written in pretty Ica Nagy's album: "*Du bist wie eine*

Blume, so hold und schön und rein—"

It was no wonder therefore that one morning Ica Nagy dashed in in a highly nervous state and threw himself crying on his Chinese blanket. He complained of migraine, and he was trembling all over. He was quite beside himself. His proud box-mates stood round, shocked, and they learned only after several minutes what had been the cause of the tears.

As a matter of fact, it had been quite a long time since anybody had last said just: "Hullo!" to an actress. This was permitted only to colleagues or, at the most, to the newspaper men. Everybody saluted the actresses in advance, and it was quite natural that even if one did not say, "I kiss your hand," or what was even more customary, "Permit me to cover your dear little hands with kisses," one at least smiled and saluted. It was simply incredible, therefore, and no one could understand what had possessed Lieutenant Székely. He had actually stopped Ica Nagy in the yard and told him off for not saluting him! Ica Nagy declared that he would never again set foot in the theatre! Let them not count on him for the next performance!

In a few seconds the major himself appeared and tried to console Ica Nagy, and soon Lieutenant Székely appeared also. He had, of course, been commanded to do so, nevertheless he begged the injured actress's pardon, and it was quite nice of Lieutenant Székely, really quite nice of him, that he lifted Ica Nagy's soft hands to his lips and smiling, amidst the deafening applause of the roommates, courteously kissed them.

Lieutenant Székely's beautiful and noble act calmed the actress. His face radiated joy and he was happily receiving congratulations all day for having, in the name of Art, broken through the grim walls of Military Discipline.

That evening, a group of admirers gathered in Ica's box, but at midnight Ica, with a charming smile upon his lips, sent them away.

"Turn out the light, children, I want to go to bed—I want to undress in the dark—" he said bashfully.

CHAPTER LIV

SEVERAL of them had been afraid that the success of the theatre would drive the other intellectual activities into the background. It was not so, for the theatre only animated the artists and the writers. Certainly, the theatre remained the leading institution, but the other activities were also successful and great interest was manifested in sports. The command dropped the idea of physical exercises, although some of them banded together and founded a physical training class, and they made plans for sports meetings in the summer. The Regulars and those who hoped for quick promotion on account of their behaviour at the front listened to lectures delivered by old soldiers. The operations on the various fronts were now discussed only at these lectures, which those who were not interested in them did not have to attend. Attendance was not compulsory, although it would not hurt anybody to attend, for the war was still going on and one could never tell whether, in the case of a separate peace with Russia, these experiences might not come in handy. But everybody was responsible to himself alone, and the command did not want to force anyone.

The theatre remained the most important of all activities. Neither the military lectures nor the vaudeville performance in the "Number Seven," nor the Lang-Kunft Art School, nor the shorthand course, nor the embroidery class, nor the lectures in Modern Criminal Procedure, could possibly compete with it.

The actors did not live separate lives, of course: they lived in the boxes with them, among the other prisoners, all the actresses, actors, musicians, singers, technical staff, dressmakers, scenic designers, the curtain raiser, the prompter, the stage manager. Nevertheless, you could see at once who belonged to the theatre, because there was a distinct difference. They walked about more self-confidently, they were more intimate with the things that were of such great interest to all of them, and they invested their own

activities with a little air of mystery. They were not very talkative, and they whispered only among themselves. Until now, the command had connived at a certain quaint custom. A number of gentlemen had bribed the Chinese sanitary labourers who were hired to remove the refuse from the camp in big barrels. The Chinese brought in the barrels empty, but, for good money, they occasionally smuggled in a couple of desperate Chinese maidens in the empty barrels. It was an epicurean privilege to receive the favours of such a Chinese maiden; it was a matter of taste, and of money, too, because the business was quite expensive. The girls had to be carried out of the camp afterwards, and the Chinese did this only if the extravagant gentlemen paid extra.

After the advent of the white Ica Nagy, and of Leona Lakner, who always played passionate rôles, the men developed a nausea for these miserable Chinese girls, and the traffic in girls became practically extinct. Leona Lakner brought up the question first: he said the custom was unworthy of the officers, and they readily realized that the custom was indeed a disgrace to the weaker sex. The command confidentially informed the officers that, hereafter, the smuggling in of women would be strictly prohibited, and when this confidential order was read, the actresses looked at each other, and said, quite relieved:

"Thank God for that."

They even smiled, and Ica put his hand on the head of a blond aspirant and absent-mindedly began to play with the blond aspirant's curly locks. It was one of those *distrait* moments in the life of a great actress when she decides to scatter small favours.

Until now, the camp had not been accustomed to scandal. Some of them had occasionally mentioned certain things, but there had never been any genuine material for scandal. How it had begun, no one knew, but all of a sudden it was there. Girls' names became popular, and some of them, especially the younger and better-looking lads, were suddenly called Katy or Cinci by everybody. They poked each other in the ribs, winked slyly at each other, and whispered:

"Gizi —"

"Oh, you don't say so!"

"But I do —"

"Don't be silly —"

"Yes, he's been called Gizi for a week now. I tell you that little Austrian chicken is the prettiest of the whole bunch —"

To be sure, Gizi was indeed a piquant morsel. He lived in a large box with Ervin Lang and Kunft. He was a curly-haired Austrian aspirant. They had said in the camp that the artists were teaching the little aspirant how to paint. Now they said: The artists say that they are teaching Gizi how to paint, but —

Indeed, several portraits of Gizi were exhibited, and in every one of them he was made up as a girl. One of them pictured him with a large Spanish shawl, the other one represented him as a gypsy-girl, with a comb in his hair.

The innuendos did not cease, but none of them found anything extraordinary in them. Nothing humiliating or insulting. Those to whom they were told and those of whom they were told merely laughed, or playfully slapped the tellers on the mouth, and when an actress was told of such a thing he said, "Naughty, naughty," and slyly threatened the accuser with his finger.

One morning, when the Russian colonel came to inspect them, as was his custom, when they were washing, the colonel stopped in the middle of the room, which was an unusual thing for him to do, and stayed there lost in thought for several minutes. This was an extraordinary occurrence, and they only realized that night what it meant. For when the orders of the day were read in the evening they were informed that hereafter the beds must not be placed next to each other but must be separated by screens.

It was only to be expected. Of course, the theatre could not be blamed for everything, although it is, everywhere, at home, too, the great parade-ground of eroticism. Here, the theatre acted like a spark which, falling into the gunpowder of sexuality which had been accumulating for four years, caused a train of erotic explosions. And all these

children, who had just reached sexual maturity but were hardly conscious of it, and quite inexperienced, were suddenly swept into this kind of gratification, instead of into the usual transgressions of youth. Female wigs and false breasts and rustling skirts and Conger's perfumes, all fell into this cave of natural human desires and sentiments, suppressed ascetically for long years, like sparks into a barrel of dynamite. The staves of morality exploded, and the splinters were now flying in a thousand directions—

They spoke quite openly about the case of Captain Branning, which was, to be sure, exceptionally amusing. Captain Branning had an orderly who was a good drummer and was therefore made the drummer of the officers' orchestra. It was an open secret in the "*Baubezirk*" that Captain Branning of the Imperial German Army was very much attached to his orderly, and when Branning's roommate died, he would have liked to have the orderly, as his room-mate. The command, however, detailed another officer to the room. Branning ran round in despair. He begged, requested, and petitioned so zealously that the command realized that there was something queer about the business, and it was said that Colonel Mitteräger himself would take up the matter. But Branning went over his head to Waletzky, and the Polish captain one day appeared in the "*Baubezirk*" and said in an extremely sarcastic and ironic tone:

"You always say, gentlemen, that I never fulfil any of your requests. You charge me with all sorts of things. I appreciate an old soldier's request, however. And I hereby order that no one shall be placed in Captain Branning's room, because he has the right to live with his orderly if he wants to —"

This was about the only request Captain Waletzky had granted in all those years without demur. Branning walked about radiating happiness; he attended every performance and watched with fond attention how his *protégé* beat the drum in the orchestra, his *protégé* who was a pink-faced Tyrolese boy and who showed quite clearly that he was very much spoiled. During the intervals, Captain Branning

dashed out for pastries, and gave them personally to the drummer, who thanked him for these expressions of attention with a blush on his face.

Lengyel, the Budapest bank-clerk, became an expert in dressmaking, He went to town occasionally to study the latest fashions, and in a few weeks, everybody called him Madame Josephine. They called him Josephine because his real name was Joseph.

Madame Josephine walked round winking and blinking, and he had a good word for everybody, and was very much interested in his art. He was always meditating new creations, and he was full of petty gossip. When he tried a new gown on one of the actresses, he would step back, bend his head to one side and look at it enraptured, then take the pins out of his mouth and say, slyly winking:

"Neat, isn't it?"

He would have liked the whole camp to be interested in nothing but the actresses wearing his gowns, in nothing but what Madame Josephine had made out of that clumsy Rebecca Ellenbogen.

He carried messages to the actresses, and little gifts. He said that he would have flowers in stock, as soon as spring came. The actresses were delighted when they were sent flowers. Of course, in winter time, flowers were pretty expensive in Siberia; but it was he who proposed that one could not possibly appear in cheap stockings and cheap underwear in "The Count of Luxembourg." Illusion was very important. Finally his suggestion was carried out and he was empowered to buy, for the actresses, silk combinations, silk stockings, and one pair of silk garters for each of them. He wanted fine perfumes, too, and new false breasts, but both of these proposals were rejected by the Drama Committee, partly because the old breasts were quite serviceable, and partly because there was plenty of *Eau de Cologne* left over from the last Conger shipment, and there was no point in spending money on them.

The Drama Committee had another reason for rejecting Madame Josephine's proposal. The Committee was well aware of the fact that there were several spendthrift Mæcen-

ases who used to send perfume and things like that to the actresses. Consequently they saw absolutely no point in spending anything out of their own funds on these things.

They voted against the powder, too, as there was enough left of the American powder, from the Conger-shipment. There was no rouge, however, and an order was placed to bring some, together with other grease-paint. Madame Josephine was radiantly happy when he arrived with all these beautiful things from town, and could be heard crying excitedly, even before he got out of the tram: "I've brought everything my dears, I have everything."

The long, gaunt, freckled cornet, and the anæmic aspirant, and the aspirant in heavy boots, clapped their hands in glee and chirped endearing words to the fat Madame Josephine, who, after finishing his work, buried his tired head in his hands and suddenly remembered:

"My God—My God—What are the children doing now at 32 József Boulevard, third floor—And my wife—Poor Paula—Do they have anything to eat? My God—This war—"

CHAPTER LV

THE pride of the Germans was Kinderlyn. He was taller even than Leona Lakner, and he carried a very small head on a huge body. He was a real actor; he was said to be a member of the Dresden National Theatre. The Germans also organized a company, but for one performance only. They elected to present a drama—of course with Kinderlyn in the leading rôle—and two or three short pieces by Schnitzler. This performance also took place, and the Germans raved with bated breath during the first play, in which Kinderlyn acted the part of a half-naked, leopard-skinned, helmeted individual who bellowed inarticulately throughout the play. The rest of the actors were merely supers around him. The play was a German classic, but only Kinderlyn had a rôle in it. He recited throughout the play, and the Germans enjoyed it immensely. Goldegg played in "Litera-

ture," one of the Schnitzler playlets; it had been expected that he would. He portrayed the authoress who marries the aristocrat at the end. He was very good, he brought out the varied sentiments of the play very well, he was passionate with the count and a foolish little Bohemian girl with the author. Old captains were beside themselves with enthusiasm, the Germans yelled proudly and triumphantly. The Hungarians did not like it particularly, and some of them remarked: Our plays are different, there is life in our plays, and temperament. But there were others who said that, on the other hand, there was literature in Germany, and taste and culture.

But from then on, the intellects of the nations united and they helped each other mutually. They even decided that they would present a bilingual vaudeville performance on New Year's Eve. That is to say, the performance would be given in the two leading languages, in Hungarian and in German, because every one understood at least one of these two, even the Imperial Ottoman officers spoke a little German.

The command, of course, made the best of the pro-theatrical sentiment. It gave all the help possible to the theatre because it reckoned, and very correctly, too, that this form of amusement, and its various side branches, absorbed many other activities. Until now, the mob had had only bread: now they had circuses, too, and they looked at events through a pleasant mist. One could not touch the theatre, it was the apple of their eye, and as far as the other camps were concerned, an object of envy.

One day the camp began to receive relief parcels, and from that day cases were arriving every day. Chinese quilts and Chinese boots arrived and, before they were distributed, the theatre was asked what it needed. It asked for everything: the boots it needed for the theatrical employees, who often worked in the yard in bitter cold weather in the interests of the community, and the quilts partly because of their cotton stuffings, which were used up in the property furniture, and partly because of the cloth-coverings, which served as canvas on the settings. The command governed the camp

through the theatre, and since so many things were constantly arriving, the command was no longer a negligible factor. It was strengthened by various hangers-on. The major was no longer independent; now that there were things to be distributed, more and more officers asked for a share in the government. The major was not exactly forced to surrender his power, but he had his weak point, and this was fully taken advantage of by those who demanded to be admitted to the government. The major, as a matter of plain fact, was not a major, only a captain, and the climbers used this bit of information to exert pressure on him. As long as there had been no reason for doing so, nobody had cared to bring this matter up, but now one could often hear a senior officer remark, as if it had been merely a slip of the tongue: "The captain, oh, sorry, I should have said, the major—"

The captain-major did not object. Willingly or not, he had to acquiesce in the fact that a sort of council attached itself to him. And within a very short time, this council was in command of everything. These men were not as tolerant as the major had been. As soon as the camp acquired a Cabinet, discipline became more severe. As soon as a Treasury came into existence, the social classes were definitely segregated. There were some who suddenly turned up their noses, and no one knew why. Exclusive societies were organised on the most fantastic grounds. Thus, for instance, a fox-hunters' society came into being. Only captains, room-commanders, and patrician cavalry officers were admitted to it. They met every Friday evening for a few glasses of wine and they planned a banquet for next year's Hubert's Day.

To be sure, they did not discriminate against artists and newspaper men, and especially not against actresses. They often invited the artists as their guests. But religious controversies arose and these disturbed even the peace of the arts. The first clash occurred at a vaudeville performance shortly before New Year's Eve, on account of Monis Neumann. He performed in this, because he was the one who best remembered a certain humorous little skit

they wanted to present, and he would not let them have the script unless he was permitted to play in it. Monis portrayed a Hungarian soldier. The other character, a German soldier, was played by him. The two of them were together in a *café*, one of them did not speak Hungarian, the other one knew nothing but German, but they became quite good friends. In the course of the play Monis Neumann ejaculated:

"God blast it—"

Whereupon Lieutenant Czernin, brother, or nephew, of our ambassador at Bucharest, leapt to his feet and yelled out:

"*Schweinerei*—"

And he walked out of the room. The performance continued in a depressed spirit. Lieutenant Czernin was a very influential man at home, and some of them said that, after the return, he would make a report directly to the Court about the camp, and that he would be in a position to drop a few words in favour of some of his comrades, and equally a few words against certain others.

Lieutenant Czernin immediately submitted a written report to the command, in which he complained that the Christian religion had been insulted at the performance, he had distinctly heard Lieutenant Monis Neumann utter a curse against Our Lady. The height of infamy! Several of them suddenly began to remember that Monis had really uttered the blasphemous phrase. Some of them even went so far as to declare most definitely that they themselves had only not left the auditorium because they had not wanted to create a scandal. Monis defended himself, he said he had submitted the rôle to the censor and had not intended to insult anybody. The Hungarian soldier, alas, used the phrase in question quite often, nevertheless, he had not said it. At this point, the situation was this: the Jews did not remember anything, not even the phrase Czernin submitted in his report.

Storm was brewing in the camp. The prospects were that either the order of the camp would be completely overturned, or the Jews would have to be moved to a separate camp. Practically all of them cursed the Jews,

but if, by accident, there was a Jew among them, they invariably added: "Of course we don't mean you, you are an exception." There was one exception in practically every box. The actors tried to bring about peace, but their efforts were unsuccessful.

Disorder reigned in the camp now, and bitterness against the Jews, especially when some one brought the news that Monis Neumann had complained to the Russians about the persecution of the Jews, and that even that lousy Waletzky, the greatest anti-Semite in the Eastern Hemisphere between Warsaw and Vladivostok, greatly disapproved of the friction. He said it was unheard of, and he would have to intervene himself.

The news arrived at two in the afternoon, and within an hour they were already forced to call an officers' meeting. The excitement had reached its climax. Neumann was asked whether he had really complained to the Polish captain, and whether he knew what the consequences of such an underhand move were. By this time, the room-mates in the various boxes were no longer on speaking terms.

At the meeting it was disclosed that Waletzky had learned of the incident quite by accident. It was Monis's great luck that Lieutenant Körös, one of the "reliable" men, had been present when Waletzky had asked Neumann. He testified that Waletzky had already known of the affair, that he had merely asked Monis whether there had been any trouble of the sort, and that Monis had answered: "I have had no trouble with anybody, not a word of it is true, the captain has been misinformed."

But this did not allay the excitement. The anti-Semites merely remarked: "They have escaped this time—"

A similar incident occurred in the "*Baubezirk*." Some of the senior officers in that camp organised a society: the Society of Those Who Will Not Return the Salute of a Jew. Lieutenant Almoslino, the postmaster, did not know who the members of this society were, and, one day, he quite accidentally saluted one of them. The club-member, of course, did not return the greeting.

Almoslino was a rich Spanish Jew who had moved to

Budapest from Bosnia. He did not create an affair of honour out of this incident, he merely went to the commander of the "*Baubezirk*" and demanded an officers' meeting. The commander did not deem it necessary to call together the meeting for, after all, it was a private affair, but since the excitement had reached a high point, the officers' meeting was called together. Lieutenant Almoslino rose and, taking a small cross out of his wallet, said:

"As a reward for my work done on behalf of Catholic churches destroyed by Mohammedans in Bosnia-Herzegovina, His Holiness the Pope gave me the cross of *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice*. Here it is. For these very same activities, the Hungarian Cardinal-Primate sent me his paternal blessing, and I treasure the postal-card on which he sent it after me, here in prison, in gratitude and reverence—"

Lieutenant Almoslino then pinned the cross on his chest and handed over the card to the commander of the camp.

The case of Lieutenant Almoslino put an end to the persecution of Jews once and for all.

CHAPTER LVI

BUT there were also definite achievements to which the command and its councillors could point with pride. First of all, the material prosperity of the camp was beyond dispute. The Red Cross visits and the consuls and the various things sold on the instalment plan created luxury. Science and the arts were generously succoured and, at last, peace reigned among the various sects. It spoke highly for the commander's wisdom and tact that he placed a Jewish cornet in the Christmas Eve programme. Indeed, the Jewish cornet's Christmas tale was the chief success of the festivities. The first number on the programme was a sermon delivered by the camp chaplain, then Captain Benkö said the Lord's Prayer, and this was followed by the Christmas tale. It was said that the cornet had warned the commander that the anti-Semitic feelings had not yet completely disappeared, and that, although he was not afraid, it would be

perhaps wise not to place a Jew in the Christmas Eve programme, especially after the chaplain and the Lord's Prayer, because it might touch certain people's susceptibilities.

"Army Regulations never discriminate against any religion. What matters is that I have confidence in your talents. It is, however, important that the tale should be solemn and touching—"

So the Jewish cornet stepped on to the platform, and at the foot of the glistening Christmas tree, at the foot of the green tree of peace surrounded by symbolical barbed-wire fences, he began his tale:

"This is the tale of a little Hungarian cow.

"The tale of an ordinary country cow, which grazed peacefully on the fields until the very end of its life.

"Until the day the fate of all aged cows overtook it.

"For when it grew old, and weak, it became sick—perhaps because of an indiscretion in its youth—and then the mild, excellent old cow was no longer of any service. There was nothing to do now but to slaughter it, and they slaughtered it and skinned it, my friends. Its flesh—the war had broken out meanwhile—was taken to the packer's.

"Its flesh was cut into small pieces and put into a big iron kettle. Makó onion was added to it, and Szeged paprika and Mármaros salt, and it was cooked, and then it was put into small tin cans, and the tin cans were sent to reinforcement troops, the tin cans containing our little cow.

"The cow was now in haversacks, and it travelled to all the four points of the compass, it went to war with beflowered soldiers. The cow's heart went to the Italian front, its liver went south, and a piece of its leg found its way to the Russian front.

"The tale will now concern itself exclusively with that part of the cow which went to the Russian front.

"The tin was now in the haversack of an old aspirant, and that excellent tin waited patiently until it should be consumed. But it was a tin to be reserved for emergency purposes only; therefore it was not permitted to be eaten, unless special orders should be issued. The special orders,

however, did not arrive. There came many orders, but never these.

"The tin began to think now that they had forgotten all about it. But it was mistaken. Once the battalion orders of the day asked whether it was still there.

"Of course it was there, although it was quite tired of trench warfare; but, alas, the weather was not favourable for an advance. The weather was fine for patrolling, however, and it went patrolling every day. Every day it went for a walk with the aspirant towards the Russian trenches.

"There were times when the aspirant had to crawl, at other times he had to run, sometimes he jumped and sometimes he was creeping forward on his belly. The poor tin was very much afraid. It was so afraid that it often hung on to something. Once the aspirant remarked:

" 'Why, this tin in my haversack is extraordinarily heavy—'

"But once the lying down was of no avail. Lying down was of avail only against bullets, it was no protection against bayonets.

"It did not protect him now either, but the aspirant was not killed, because the bayonet did not touch any of the important organs. It went through his tongue only, and pierced his right cheek, but that was all.

"Then the enemy soldier pulled the bayonet out of the aspirant, because he needed his rifle. The enemy made a stretcher out of his rifle with the help of another one, just as they had been taught to do on the drill-ground. With the wounded Russian, the aspirant was taken to Russia on this stretcher.

"The enemy put the haversack under the aspirant's head, in order that he should lie more comfortably. If they had not done this, the aspirant could not have breathed, he had lost a lot of blood, and it would have been very unpleasant for him if he had not been able to breathe.

"The aspirant was slowly cured in the Russian hospital. His recovery was slow, but not on account of the tongue. It was delayed on account of his belly, because later they discovered that that too had been pierced, by a bullet.

"At last he was completely cured. He lost some weight, to be sure, but they sent him off, nevertheless, to a camp of prisoners of war.

"These prisoners lived in infinite Siberia, far away, on the shores of the Yellow Sea. They lived there in sorrow; but they managed to make room for the aspirant.

"And he began, too, just like the others, he built a box out of coloured cardboard and planks. He procured for himself a table and some small chairs. He put his treasures in order: he stuck the Japanese post-cards and the post-cards of Lake Baikal on the cardboard walls, put his summer and winter underwear in a cigar box, in short, he tidied up the house.

" And he gazed at his rescued belongings, which he had been carrying ever since he had left home: three field post-cards, two little notebooks, and the tin can with the cow's flesh. The tin can he had not yet opened, because he had not been ordered to.

"The order had not arrived.

" 'And now—it will never arrive,' the exiled aspirant reflected.

"The old aspirant only gazed and gazed at the tin can, and one day Christmas came.

"Christmas came again, the Siberian Christmas came again, although all the cabalas, and all the magic formulas, and even the great Napoleon's own solitaire, said that there would be no more Siberian Christmas.

"Nevertheless it was so, and the Siberian Christmas came again.

"The Siberian Christmas Eve was here again, and one could not see the prisoners in the low-walled boxes, because they all buried their heads in their hands.

"Their sighs came sadly; the invisible telegraph machines of times and distances, and the tearful wagon of memories raced with them to far-away snow-covered yards, to far-away Christmas trees—

"There was a huge Christmas tree in the heart of every prisoner, a great, big, brilliant, crying, glistening Christmas tree.

"There were little lamps with paper shades on the little tables in the boxes, and great silence, solemn, church-like silence hung in the rooms. The prisoners prayed, and their hands trembled, and their hearts fluttered. And the aspirant's hands trembled too, and his heart was also full of reverence, and he took his knife out of his pocket, and he took the dented, worn, battle-scarred tin can off the shelf. He stuck his knife in the can, and now all the prisoners, hearing the noise, turned and looked at him. He opened the tin can, and rose in the dimly lighted room, the bearded aspirant rose, and it seemed as if he had been a priest, and his voice sounded as if it had come from a pulpit.

"He raised on high the dented, worn, battle-scarred tin can and, in a toneless, ghastly voice, he spoke:

" 'There are peace-flesh and peace-blood, peace-skies and peace-earth—there are peace-grass and peace-meadows, peace-water and peace-air in it—and peace-flowers and peace-sunbeams—'

"And all the miserable and unfortunate prisoners gathered round him, and they ate out of the tin can, of the cow's flesh.

"They ate of it and cried.

"It was like a ceremony addressed to their hearts, like inspiring prophecy, like a magic message, like a cheerful and peaceful holiday.

"It was like all these, and peace and patient hope settled in their hearts for the night. . . ."

The tale had a great effect on the prisoners; some of them even cried, they were so touched. The editor of the *Siberian Gazette* asked the cornet for the tale, he said he wanted to publish it in his paper. Then everybody might copy it out of the paper and keep it as a souvenir.

The prisoners stayed together until very late on Christmas Eve and, silently lost in thoughts, they sipped tea in the study. Many went up to the Jewish cornet to congratulate him; even the extremists were pacified and all shook hands with him. They said, this was different, this was something. One wouldn't have thought that there were people who so thoroughly felt the spirit of the feast of

Brotherly Love.

Lieutenant Gotthilf, too, went up to the cornet, and sat down next to him. He was silent for a while, then said:

"Why doesn't a man like you show himself in a museum? "

"What's that? What did you say, please?"

The poor cornet stuttered in his amazement.

"What did you say, please?"

"I said, why don't you show yourself in a museum? No, not in a museum! I should have said, in a freak show!"

"What do you want of me? Why should I show myself in a museum?"

"Because you ought to be stuffed. Because you are the greatest conformer on earth. Because you're a model for assimilation and adaptation. Why can't you write such brilliant tales for your own holidays—"

"Of course, I can—I can—"

Dr. Gotthilf smiled sarcastically: "Don't wait another minute. Go over to their side right away."

German officers came to his table and stared at him in admiration. They had already been told of the story, and they looked at the cornet as if he had been a magician.

"*Braver Kerl—Braver Kerl,*" they said.

A captain was enthusiastically explaining to a Tyrolese yager lieutenant that there had not been so clever a tactical move in the entire war. The command has done this beautifully. All the aspirants and cornets in the camp had now been placed under an obligation. For hadn't it been a cornet who had shone so brilliantly? And the anti-Semites were also disarmed, and the Jews too. To put this Jewish cornet on the programme was a superb move on the part of the command. To be sure, he was a talented chap; one had to admit that the whole thing wouldn't have been worth a damn without him. But just the same, it had been a clever move on the part of the command.

"Well, tell me," Dr. Gotthilf's sharp voice cried at one of the tables, "tell me, suppose Almoslino had no Papal cross? Then would they have to kill all the Jews? Suppose this cornet was untalented. Does this necessarily mean that you have to stage a pogrom? Because, don't forget, there

was almost a pogrom here—"

Lieutenant Haertl approached the cornet with a sly grin on his lips. He blinked from behind his glistening pince-nez at the story-teller, and discreetly gave him a piece of paper under the table. The story-teller put the folded paper on the table. What did Haertl want of him in secret?

It was an order for a black overcoat, free of charge, from the warehouse of the Welfare Committee.

The poor story-teller went pale, and wandered out of the room with trembling knees.

As he was approaching the door he heard two half-baked aspirants arguing in the anteroom:

"You didn't understand the whole point of the story. I tell you, it was a revolutionary story. The Jews are always thinking of the revolution. He meant that the seed of the revolution is in every man's haversack. But they don't open it, not until the Great Holiday. Then the one who has most faithfully preserved it, will open it, and then everybody will eat of the cow's flesh, people from all over the world will go on pilgrimage to him, and everybody will feast on the tin can of the haversack—"

"Perhaps he didn't mean any symbolisms? Perhaps he merely wanted to tell us a tale, a Christmas tale—"

"Oh, don't be so dense—"

CHAPTER LVII

BELLS ring all over the world, bells ring in churches, and bells ring on Christmas trees, bells ring in schools and parliaments, and bells ring for horses on racecourses—But here, in our camp, bells ring only in the guard-room, when Waletzky comes, and they open the gates for him alone. But they ring no bells for us—the gates are never thrown open for us—

"There is no silk here, only one cheap Japanese silk handkerchief protrudes from the pocket of the *praporshchik*, but, at home, beautiful silk cravats are on display

in the shop-windows, silk shirts sweat on the backs of jockeys, silks cover the pink breasts of deserted brides, silk is on the girls' heads, on blond, brunette, and Titian heads, silent and happy and loud and exciting silks—

"Our taste has been destroyed and we eat nothing but fish—we live without books and papers, without streets, without freedom, without occupations—

"We do not go visiting, we never go to see our parents, we can't see our children, we don't fight for civic rights, for social reforms—

"We begged the Countess to get marmalade for us, we begged her for two dessert days weekly—

"And now the Countess thinks that this is the only desire in our hearts, this, the two dessert days—

"We are wrapped in Chinese quilts and we walk in a snow-covered courtyard, and we live on foreign words and we constantly get farther and farther away from our own lives—

"But we have to tell you, Countess, that the marmalade and the two dessert days float only on the surface of our hearts.

"If you opened our hearts with a key, you would see that we keep these cheap and tawdry things only on the surface—

"If you opened our hearts, Countess, if you unloaded them, you would see that, at the bottom of our hearts, we keep secrets: hopes are kept there, frozen hopes, desperate and mad hopes, of which we dare not even think—

"Our hearts would scream and bleed in your hands, Countess, because the voice of our children, the pain of our wives, the smile of our little girls, the trembling hopes of our mothers, the fear of our fathers, the sound of village church bells, the weight of our sad days are buried there, and our frozen and desperate hopes, too, which know neither day nor night, neither rest nor holiday—

"That's why we need the French language and the Tatar language and 'The Life of the Bees,' and 'The Life of Lady Hamilton,' and the Captive Officers' Theatre and the two dessert days and the cheap marmalade—

"In the village of Kitai, beggars, up on the hill, in red brick barracks, in the prisoners' camp—"

This editorial was published in the *Siberian Gazette* in connection with the fact that, within a very short time, two attempts to escape had occurred.

A superficial observer might have thought that the camp was completely lost in mortal pleasure, and there was nothing in the camp but artistic and intellectual activities, and affairs of honour, and squabbles in the theatre, and arguments, and intrigues.

Scandals in the dressing-rooms: Who would play the two-word rôle of a chambermaid at the next performance? Who would be the next one to be promoted from the chorus? And who would receive, along with the rôle, silk combinations and silk garters instead of cheap underwear and elastic garters? Was there again going to be a fight about this, just as on the other day, when the performance had very nearly to be cancelled on account of the actresses quarrelling?

And then was there nothing but these questions of seniority, was there nothing to do but to speculate whether Captain Benkö was only a lieutenant and Major Steiner a mere captain? And then all those arguments with Lieutenant Haertl! He trembled for every piece of soap he gave out, as if he had been giving away his own. Did those who sent the relief parcels expect to get paid for them? Were the Americans really trying to make a business out of the plight of the prisoners? And was Schenk never going to stop his twanging on the guitar? The gymnasts were already training for the athletic meetings in the spring, and there were some who had just begun to read six-volume novels. It seemed as if an evil bane had been sitting on the camp, as if they had all forgotten their connections with the outer world.

Only when Postmaster Almoslino arrived and placed a big pile of cards from home on the table of the common-room, there reigned a frightened and shocked silence in the camp.

Green and yellow cards dropped on the table, green for

for the Hungarians, yellow for the Austrians, and they ran to the table when their names were read out as if it had been the roll-call of the Day of Judgment.

It seemed that the cheap marmalade and the admiration for the arts and the intoxication of the guitar floated only on the surface—

But within a very short time, two attempts at escape had taken place.

Aladár Dajka Dantsek, the cunning jack-of-all-trades of the camp, had always succeeded in everything he had attempted.

He had succeeded in making a bass viol, a still, a violin out of six or seven hundred pieces, he had succeeded in solving the problem of the theatre spotlight—it had finally been made out of oil lamps—he had succeeded in making a trap-door for the theatre, and a curtain too.

For some weeks past, he had been seen in grave conversation with his four box-mates, and whenever anyone approached, they became very silent. Everybody thought that they were preparing a great joke, a colossal surprise. Perhaps they were building a revolving stage; nothing was impossible to Dantsek.

One day, Captain Waletzky and the Russian colonel came to inspect the camp. The colonel, God alone knew why, was on horseback and he was galloping madly round the camp. Waletzky, with a brief-case under his arm, ran asthmatically after him, to be on hand whenever the colonel stopped. In one spot, the snow gave way under the colonel and he was nearly lost, together with his horse, in the snow.

The colonel told Waletzky, who arrived out of breath, to go and see what there was on the other side of the fence, behind that building. It was forty-five below zero, said the colonel, and the snow should have been frozen sufficiently to carry a man with his horse without any danger to them.

Waletzky returned after a little while and assured the colonel with a bland smile on his lips that it was nothing, there was only some kind of ditch there, a pit of no im-

portance. The colonel went away, but Waletzky returned.

He called together the officers, and in a very nervous and excited tone told them that he had expected the prisoners to be more sensible. The camp should realize that any kind of attempt at escape was foolish. Some of them had dug a pit beneath the snow near the fence and, under the protection of the snow, had taken several planks out of the fence. If the colonel had not come this morning, the miserable wretches might have attempted escape to-night. He would not have wasted a word on the whole affair, and they knew it, if it were merely a question of putting the runaways before a firing squad. But if their attempted escape had come to light, he would have also lost his job. Consequently he would not report it this time, and would act as if he had not learned of it at all. On the other hand, he knew that the attempt could not have been made by any one but Dantsek, the jack-of-all-trades. And he would immediately proceed to search his quarters. Realize, gentlemen, and this I am telling you as one intelligent man to another, it is forty-five below zero at night. The miserable wretch could not drag himself farther than four or five miles at the most. There are guards on the Amur and guards on the Ussuri. Suppose he steals through them. Suppose he reaches China. Don't you know that a strip fifteen miles wide beyond the border line is under the supervision of the Russians? Cossacks patrol that strip. Do you know what fate is awaiting the runaways in China? The Chinese are ready to murder them for a pair of boots. The stupidest thing on earth is to risk one's life in vain. This time I shan't report it, but I may as well tell you frankly that I do so merely because I want to keep my job. I hope that you will realize this. Let me remind you once more, there is no sense in trying to fight one's way through ten thousand versts, when death, certain death, lurks around the corner at every verst.

Then he confiscated from Dantsek the collapsible and portable rowboat, the wooden skates, the primitive dagger and the half-bag of dried rye bread which had been intended to sustain him to the very end of the Gobi Desert,

throughout his way to Indo-China, or, perhaps, to Persia—

Ernst Wurm was the Hungarians' favourite German. In the Hungarian plays, he played only in the chorus, but he often got rôles in German plays. His last part was that of a young girl who, amazed at everything, repeated throughout the evening:

"*Wenn das die Mama wüsste*—"

The locks of a blond wig glistened over Ernst Wurm's boyish face as he kept on repeating, both on the opening night and in the revival, innocently, charmingly and purely, the simple sentence:

"*Wenn das die Mama wüsste*—If Mamma only knew of this—"

But Mamma Wurm did not know of anything. She did not know that little Ernst was a conscientious and diligent student who undertook to portray feminine rôles at the urgent request of his box-mates only, that he had remained a good and pure-hearted boy, that he was even more amazed at life, at the queer life prisoners led, than at the things that happened on the stage.

But, one day, Ernst Wurm vanished from the camp. And no one knew how. All of a sudden he was nowhere.

Some Russian lumber-men told them a few days later that they had met an aspirant in the forest lower down the Ussuri. He had begged them not to mention their meeting him to any one, and he had given them money for showing him the shortest way to China.

A patrol composed of prisoners went to look for him, and they found Aspirant Ernst Wurm frozen to death at the foot of a tree on the bank of the Ussuri. The small sledge he had taken with him was now standing by his side, but it did not contain one bite of the food which was to have sustained Ernst Wurm on his way to Indo-China or Persia.

The puttee was missing from one of his legs. Whoever robbed Ernst of his food had first strangled him to death with the puttee. Ernst Wurm froze only after he had been murdered and robbed.

A melancholy funeral took place in the camp the next day.

The senior officer of Room Number Six began his address over the coffin thus:

"*Wenn das die Mama wüsste*—If Mamma only knew of this—"

It seemed that the two dessert days floated on the surface of the hearts only. It seemed that at the bottom of their hearts there was agonizing despair. For, after all, it is only human to have superficial and mortal laughter on the lips at a time when corpses lie unburied in the heart. . .

CHAPTER LVII

THE evening brought a great surprise. Simi Grosz looked round proudly before he began to read; he smiled self-confidently, as if he himself had done it all.

"Petrograd is in the midst of a great rebellion. The garrison has rebelled and joined the Revolution—

(He remembered Professor Regéczi, who had often explained to them that rebels should never be confused with revolutionaries, and especially not with those who rise against the yoke of a foreign power to gain freedom for their country. Simi Grosz mentioned both rebellion and revolution—)

"The Cabinet Ministers have been arrested, and the Czar's train has been held up between Petrograd and Moscow. The mutineers have appointed a new Ministry—

(Now he speaks of mutineers—)

"Milyukov has been appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs. In his first speech he said: The new Ministry has not been appointed by the people, but by the Revolution—

(This fellow Milyukov knows the difference, just as if he had studied under Professor Regéczi—)

"If the new Ministry had been appointed by the people, the country would now be at the mercy of the enemy, because the people are ignorant, and do not know their own interests, and would want to have the war stopped at once. But the new Ministry has been appointed by the Revolution, and the Revolution is for an ultimate victory and will

continue the war—

(Offhand, he could not think of a revolution which had broken out for an Ultimate Victory and for continuing a war—)

"Although, for the time being, we do not know what form of government Russia will choose for herself, one thing is certain; the present ruler will have to go, the Revolution wants Michael Alexandrovitch on the throne of the Romanovs—"

That evening, Simi Grosz scored a great success with his reading, everybody was excited, everybody was shouting at the top of his voice. Only Uncle Hegyi sat gloomily in his box and, after the ventilation, just before retiring, he spoke up in a ghastly voice:

"I'll lay three to one that we'll stay here for two more years—"

"But there is revolution is Russia! Revolution, Uncle Hegyi!"

"I heard it. The Revolution is victorious. The Revolution for the ultimate victory and for the continuation of the war—"

The next day, Captain Waletzky appeared in the camp with a radiant face and a red cockade. He himself brought in the latest number of the *Amurskaya Zhizn*, which was printed in red ink. Waletzky said that the true Russian soul had been victorious, that as a supreme proof of the vitality of the nation the Revolution had been triumphant, and Russia was now on her way to the laurel wreaths of victory. The way of democracy had been opened and national democracy would now lead the nation, so long bent beneath the yoke of false principles, to the Land of Promise.

Thus spoke Waletzky, who had all of a sudden become an ardent supporter of the Revolution. He proudly declared that the first tender buds of democracy had already arrived: hereafter the general will not be addressed as Your Excellency, but simply as Mr. General; the ranks will not have to salute officers in the street except when they are on duty, or in dress uniform. He hoped that the inmates of the camp would also adopt a few new and

glorious customs, as a token of their sympathy: he would be at their service in these matters. Otherwise, no changes would take place in the camp as regards the situation of the prisoners: their rights would be respected just as before. The victorious Revolution would continue to take care of the mental and physical necessities of the prisoners, just as if nothing had happened.

"Won't there be a little freedom too?"

Captain Waletzky smiled slyly:

"We guarantee your physical and mental well-being. But if we free you, we cannot guarantee your physical well-being, and we can protect your mental well-being from the dangerous influences of the Revolution only by keeping you within the fences—"

Simi Grosz read long stories every night about how the Revolution spread and how strong it was, of furious bombardments round the Kremlin, of street battles, and of the awakening of a hundred and sixty million souls; but, within the camp, everything remained silent and dull and hopeless. It seemed that Uncle Hegyi's theory was not far out at all, the Revolution was victorious, the Revolution that had broken out for the prolongation of the war, the Revolution that had broken out for the prolongation of their captivity, the Revolution that had broken out in order to prolong the rule of Waletzky and Haertl, the Revolution which had broken out against peace and for the postponement of their return home.

They became resigned to the facts that this was Waletzky's revolution, that it was the Welfare Committee's revolution, and not a liberating revolution.

The courses continued, the captains continued to teach tactics in front of the maps. Mr. Lustig continued his illicit trading in the milk set aside for the sick, indoor training for the spring competitions continued. Lieutenant Nagy began to carve a new box, Cornet Papp began to study a new language, Lieutenant Held wrote home and asked for a heavy sweater for next winter. Only little bits of the great Russian Revolution filtered in through the little chinks in the fences.

For some reason or other Major Steiner was relieved, and a genuine pre-war major took his place. An eternally smiling, charming old man, of whom, however, it was said that he was incredibly cunning. Lieutenant Haertl was also relieved, although, as the new major remarked, he might as well have stayed, because the warehouse was empty anyway.

CHAPTER LIX

THE new commander, Major Füzessi, was a gentle-mannered officer. He was in favour of every suggestion, he considered seriously every proposal. He never flatly refused anybody, but any one could see that, as a matter of plain fact, Major Füzessi never satisfied any request. He talked affably, suavely and benevolently. At the officers' meetings he said that he was very well satisfied with the behaviour of the Corps, he found more discipline than he had expected. But since conditions in Russia were extremely disorganized, they would have to keep together more than ever before. Anybody who set himself against the order of the camp injured the interests of the whole community.

"Since we discuss every important question at officers' meetings, and since the officers' meetings decide in everything, the greatest achievement of the Russian Revolution, that the soldiers decide their own fate, has not come to us as a surprise. The Russian colonel has promised us to protect the interests of the camp provided we maintain order. It is most important that the camp should be isolated from the outside world, as a protection against the unhealthy bacilli and the disrupting germs of the Russian Revolution. We must maintain the strictest discipline. The Russian colonel suggests that petty offences should be punished by our own command, for he is instructed to inflict very severe punishment in practically all instances. His suggestion is practically equal to autonomy. Of course, simple confinement to one's room is no punishment, he said, and therefore he suggested that we should fix up a cell where we could lock up delin-

quents. In view of the fact that the Russian suggestion was made in the best interests of the camp, and since we realize that mere confinement is a merely flippant punishment in the present circumstances, and since complying with this request is tantamount to autonomy, we cannot possibly neglect his suggestion. It is much better that we, ourselves, should inflict punishments upon transgressing prisoners, than that we should let them be penalized by the Russians, who, in these turbulent days, would not hesitate to arraign them before a revolutionary court-martial. After all, none of us intend to do anything against discipline and order, but if anybody is so unchivalrous, as to injure the interests of his brother officers, he really deserves to be shoved in the clink."

Coming as it did at the end of this speech, the word "clink" tickled their sense of humour and they broke into laughter. The grey-haired, grave major smiled when he said "clink," and when he saw that he had scored a hit, he began to laugh too. He even repeated it. Then he said: "In the jug—"

The word "jug" created even more laughter, and the officers' meeting had nothing to say against fixing up one of the rooms as a "clink," that is to say, as a "jug."

The orders of the day that evening already contained directions regarding the prison. The room next to the common-room was selected, and it would be transformed in the course of the next day. The orders of the day also informed them that any officer locked up in the prison would lose, for the period of his confinement, his rights, which would then be exercised, on his behalf and for him, by the command.

Aspirant Bornett opined that now there were two prisons. One was the barbed-wire fence and the other one the cell. Uncle Hegyi looked up from his calculations and ironically remarked that autonomy was never given gratis. Why weren't they satisfied with autonomy. After all, if they were to be given new rights in such rapid succession they would soon be going home—

In the meantime, Simi Grosz read the wildest things from the papers. Fifteen thousand Petrograd soldiers and workers

had demanded the resignation of Milyukov. The front was beginning to break up. Russian soldiers charged their own artillery and forced them at the point of the bayonet to cease firing. Russian commanders were resigning by scores; they had lost control over their regiments. A brigade commander who had tried to force the rebels to execute his commands with a revolver in his hand, was shot dead by them. The soldiers looted, bombed bridges, and burned up military warehouses. The tanks attacked their own troops. Off Tarnopol, two German companies routed an entire Russian brigade.

Huge hordes of retreating soldiers streamed towards the rear, towards the interior of Russia, carrying banners with the inscription: "Down with War!" The First Brigade of the Russian Guards retreated without fighting and left the Petrovsky Brigade to its fate. General Selinov was unable to convince his soldiers that their ideas concerning Fatherland, Honour, Future, and Liberty were base and mean. Off Tarnopol, artillery officers went down on their knees before their soldiers and begged them not to leave the guns to the enemy, but the ranks would not touch them. The regiments were all mixed up and capital punishment was restored. Tens of thousands of soldiers were plundering the homes of peaceful citizens. The roads along which the retreating armies marched were lined, on both sides, with carcasses of horses, broken wagons and upturned gun-carriages. And, of course, with human corpses. In the cities, the retreating soldiers broke open the doors of the houses with hand grenades. The 112th Ural Regiment was fraternizing with the enemy.

The whole collapse had been created by inhuman agitators who called themselves Bolsheviki, but who they were and what their object was no one knew for sure. It seemed that their leaders had been hired by the Germans, and that they were the ones who spread the ignominious slogan "Down with War." The wisest thing would be to silence these Bolsheviki, and many of them had already been arrested.

Simi Grosz read these things, and the news gave them

hopes for freedom. The home authorities conducting their reinstatement would most probably consider the fact that the captive officers kept themselves aloof from the revolutionary elements and maintained respect for their commanders in a most favourable light. The Russian command upheld the prisoners' behaviour as a model one to the Russian soldiers, and when Lieutenant Csajági once left the camp without permission everybody was highly indignant. There was self-discipline, and there was self-subordination. These had to be respected, and although Lieutenant Csajági was merely reprimanded, Aspirant Klinger, who also went for a walk without permission, was punished with three days' confinement. This was the first punishment dealt out by the command. They said it was done merely to make the prisoners realize that the cell was no joke. The command's prompt action calmed the camp.

The official attitude was that the developments should be patiently watched: the prisoners had nothing to do with what the Russians were doing. Let the Russians attend to their own business. On the other hand, they couldn't very well be interested in the events at home either, because no letters from home had arrived since the Revolution, and the Russian newspapers printed but very meagre news of the enemy's operations. Consequently, the thing to do was to wait patiently, completely disregarding the Revolution. There were enough goings-on in the camp anyway.

A very interesting sports meeting was in preparation. It was to include several humorous events too. Sack-race, a pancake-eating contest, a sprint for Old Boys, and a race for officers over fifty. Not to mention the ambitious football match which was going to be the outstanding feature of a meeting scheduled to last for three days.

Some of them suggested that it would be a good idea if the two Budapest football players from among the orderlies could also participate in the game. These two players had been stars at home, but they were only privates, consequently, it was very doubtful whether they could participate in the officers' game. It would be splendid, of course, if they could, because they were very badly needed. One of them

was, incidentally, their trainer, quite an intelligent man, although only a private. Both of them were orderlies, and it was indeed difficult to see how the difficulty could possibly be solved.

A committee visited Major Füzessi and laid the problem before him. The game would gain greatly in interest if the two excellent privates could participate. Was there no way of finding a solution?

Major Füzessi listened to the delegates and then said that it was a very complicated question, but since he had the success of the games greatly at heart, he would think over the matter. He hoped he would be able to find a solution.

The next day, at the close of the officers' meeting, Major Füzessi brought up the question of the football match, and said that it pleased him to know that the camp trusted him so much as to bring the matter to him. Then he announced that he had found a solution. The two privates would participate in the game, but only after satisfying certain formalities.

He did not tell them what the formalities were, and some of them suggested that Major Füzessi, as the commander of a self-contained unit, had the right to promote the two privates to the rank of aspirant.

Thereupon others remarked that the commander of a self-contained unit enjoyed this right only in the firing line, and it was rather doubtful whether captivity was to be regarded as the firing line. Most probably it was, because some of them who had been figuring and calculating all these years how much back pay was due to them, took their pay in the firing line as the basis of their calculations—

The meeting was a huge success, and exceeded all expectations. The team of the "Six" beat the combined team of the "Seven" and the "*Baubezirk*" by 7 to 2. Indubitably, the six goals the two privates kicked helped a great deal. Major Füzessi, to the complete satisfaction of the entire camp, had solved the problem in the following manner. Just before the game the two privates formally requested to be brought before the commanding officer. This having been done, they humbly begged him to grant them permission to play with

the officers. The commanding officer graciously and formally granted them permission so to do, and the game started. Similarly, they again reported after the game and humbly thanked him for the permission. The Old Boys' race, in the course of which the Old Boys were to run round one of the barracks, was very amusing also. As soon as they were out of sight the audience waited in vain for them to reappear again. At last, several spectators left the stand to find out what had happened to the competitors behind the barrack. They found that the Old Boys had sat down to eat. They finished the race only after the meal. Loud laughter greeted the Old Boys when they finally appeared from behind the barrack, and the third day of the Sports Festival ended with this merry episode. The three days' exciting amusements exhausted the prisoners, and they listened sleepily, fatigued and indifferent, to Simi Grosz's reading. Anyway, Simi Grosz had been quite boring these past few days, he had been reading the same news over and over again, with very little difference.

This time it was the Third Division which had retreated without command, the Volunteers' Battalion had now been sent against the 143rd Regiment, and the Volunteers' Battalion had scored an absolute victory over the rebels, completely annihilating them—

Simi Grosz read the paper to himself because, by this time, the entire room was lost in a deep and innocent slumber. Some of them smiled, seeing in their dreams the humorous race of the Old Boys. . . .

CHAPTER LX

BEYOND the fences, the Russian Revolution raged, on Polish fields and on the Doberdo. Soldiers marched with clenched fists into the trenches, but within the fences Lieutenant Körös tenaciously hung on to his last year's garden. It was nearly a foot and a half wide, and almost as long. This time he planted string beans, because last year the paprika had not been successful. The Amur overflowed its

banks and tens of thousand of fat salmon got stuck in the mud when the water subsided. Captive privates in ragged uniforms, employed by the beggarly Chinese in the shacks on the river, cleaned, dried and smoked salmon for the winter. Uncle Hegyi only slightly raised the odds when someone asked him to extend the time-limit. To get home within five years was not an exaggerated hope any more. The Welfare Committee's warehouse was empty; Almoslino came only out of habit, he never brought any mail. The Russian guards spoke disrespectfully to Waletzky, and the Russian colonel was nowhere to be seen. Kerensky was still in power, he was even preparing for a great summer offensive, but the small Kerensky roubles, the new money which was about as large as two stamps put together, was steadily losing its value. Some of them said that this was because the banknote was so small and the Russian people had no confidence in small notes, but the experts contended that the value of a banknote did not depend on its size. One could not understand on what the value of the banknote depended, because the Czarist roubles were also losing their value.

The summer was full of excitement and hopes for an early peace, but news came only of destructions and rebellions, and of the great offensive Kerensky was preparing. Consuls Heedbloom and Conger occasionally visited them, but they had nothing interesting to say and, shrugging their shoulders, refused all requests. They said the warehouses were empty, everything was distributed, there was no money, no clothes, no marmalade, no dried eggs, no nail-clippers. They said that the prisoners should have been more thrifty, it was unwise to distribute everything. If things continued as they were, they too, would go home to their respective countries. The prisoners should be glad that at least their lives were safe. It was good to be within four walls in these turbulent days.

There were zestless tennis tournaments in the yard, and malicious remarks flew hither and thither. Wasserlauf noticed that Csányi scratched himself while playing tennis. He remarked that men who had lice shouldn't play tennis.

The Russians gave them nothing but salmon to eat. They

hated it, they shuddered even at the thought of salmon.

Small private kitchens were established and, at mid-day, fires were burning all over the camp. The food of these private kitchens seemed better even than their former food, despite the fact that the money was worth less and less day after day. They occasionally got hold of some beans, lentils, and tins, and sometimes even of a few pounds of pork, and when they ate the meat with lots of fried onions they could not smell the odour of salmon so badly. For the hogs were more than ever fed on salmon only. Dorogi always cooked more than he needed, and sold the remaining portions. This got him into trouble, the command summoned him and asked him to prove that he made no profit on the sales. Officers were not permitted to work for profit, and it seemed that Dorogi could not wholly disprove the charge, because he was forbidden to cook.

They had recourse to the funds, because that was the only way somehow to keep up the standard of the mess. Only one fund was exempt, the fund out of which they hoped to cover the expenses of the journey home.

This was sacred, and no one would have thought of taking even one kopeck out of it.

The actresses came back empty-handed from the store, not even they could get anything. Neither dates, nor figs, nor preserves, nor eggs.

When they were taken to the bath they met the miserable privates again, as they always did when they went down to the river. There was a ditch near the camp, for the kitchen refuse, and as they passed by the ditch two broken ruins, two shadows of men, turned towards them. They were picking rubbish in the ditch and when they noticed the officers they stretched out their hands, begging. With their other hands they pressed something against their naked chests. When they got nearer they saw that what they pressed against their chests were potato peel and rotting vegetables. They dug them out of the ditch. A piece of dry crust was treasure to them, to the orphans who could not get in a hospital, who were so weak that even the Chinese refused to hire them, who could not even fish, who could do nothing but rummage

on a dunghill, feverish and dying.

A few coins fell into their outstretched palms, and the officers decided that the camp, such as it was, was still better than nothing.

The economic crisis came practically without any warning. The invisible power which had hitherto just poured goods upon them became very tight-fisted of a sudden. Money, of course, was the same, the pay was the same, their only trouble was that everything had become dearer .....

"I wish Kerensky would win—"

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Against your own country?"

"Yes, against my own country! The war has got to end some day! And I'd like to know why we need the Ukraine? Why do we need Warsaw? Do they want to conquer the whole of Russia? Do they want to advance twelve thousand miles? Do the troops of the Central Powers want to make a triumphal entry into Irkutsk? Do they want to sign the Armistice in Irkutsk? How do they want to conquer Russia? Lengthwise? To Vladivostok? Or breadthwise? From the Arctic Sea to Persia? Eh?"

"But why do you need Kerensky's victory?"

"Well, perhaps then this rotten Kerensky money would be worth more."

"Shame—"

"Why shame? The major drinks chocolate every morning —chocolate made with condensed milk—"

The news of the condensed milk and the chocolate spread in the camp. It reached the major's ears. At the next officers' meeting, he brought it up.

"There may be some who are in poorer health than I am, and are in need of more health-giving food than what they get. They may take exception to the fact that I have to follow doctor's orders and drink chocolate and condensed milk. Alas, my protests were of no avail, in vain I begged the doctor to leave me alone, he would not listen to me. I told him I am a soldier, I can get along very well without chocolate and condensed milk, let some one else who needs them more than I do have them. But, my friends, I pro-

tested in vain, the doctor said that old men have to drink milk, and he forced me to accept them. But I'd like to know the opinion of the officers' meeting, as to whether it is in the interests of the community that I should be kept alive; I'd like to know the opinion of the camp as to whether it is necessary for me to give up the chocolate and condensed milk. An old man like myself—"

There were tears in their eyes, and they would not let the major go on. They unanimously voted him the chocolate and condensed milk.

They consoled themselves with the lives of the privates. It was possible to live without condensed milk and chocolate. They told tales of the sufferings of the privates, that was how they consoled each other. After all, their present food was not so very bad, it was even better than what the ranks got at home.

Lieutenant Horváth had finished a beautiful inlaid work. He called it "Little Father." "Little Father" was a Russian mujik, and Lieutenant Horváth copied him out of a Russian illustrated weekly, the *Argus*. The old Russian was made out of all sorts of coloured chips of wood, and he was serving as the top of a handsome carved box. One day Lieutenant Horváth asked permission to go into the town, and when he got home he no longer had the box. But he brought home some sausages and several pounds of beans and Siberian lentils.

The command immediately ordered an investigation, and Lieutenant Horvath walked about dejectedly for several days.

Then the matter was taken to the officers' meeting.

The investigation took place because both the "Little Father" and the sausages had been reported to the command. They had been reported in such a manner that the command was under the impression that Lieutenant Horváth had sold the box and had bought food with the money.

The command again declared most emphatically that officers should not sell their handiwork for profit, should not take salaried employment, and consequently, and quite obviously, should not prepare anything for which they ex-

pected to be paid with money. And Lieutenant Horváth was charged with selling his handiwork.

The investigation brought to light the fact that the charge in its original form was not quite true. Lieutenant Horváth proved that he had merely exchanged the box for food. Essentially this amounted to a sale, but in view of the fact that it was not quite so, the command merely severely reprimanded Lieutenant Horváth and ordered him to pay to the Mess Fund an amount equal to the value of the food for which he had exchanged the box. The command then again definitely forbade the officers to play tricks with Army Regulations in such a manner.

The officers could not possibly do such a thing. It would be most deplorable if discipline, hitherto so excellently maintained, should be destroyed just before the return home. Things could not be solved so simply. It would be indeed very nice if all of them could all of a sudden start making boxes or hire themselves out to the Russians for all sorts of work. Why, in that case the engineers could simply go to work in ammunition factories, and where would this lead to? Why, then we, ourselves, would help the enemy to defeat our own country. The prohibition of such work was therefore of great moral significance, not only because it tended to preserve the prestige of the Officers' Corps. It would be downright high treason for us, with our work, to help the Russian Army in any manner or way whatsoever. . .

CHAPTER LXI

WHERE were the beautiful days of spring, the merry sports meetings, where the days of plenty, the pineapple preserves, the arguments over artistic problems? The last sign of the prosperity of the camp was the Old Boys' race, it was the last of the unalloyed pleasures, the last not yet ruined by cruel need. The Amur still poured forth salmon, but even the sight of it filled them with nausea. To be sure, there was no famine yet, for there was plenty of fish, but everything else was beginning to disappear. The pay was often late, and

towards the end of summer, it stopped completely.

The mess-officers told them confidentially and under oath that they were able to give even the considerably inferior food which they now had only because recourse had been taken to the secret funds. Money for winter wood and oil had also been taken out of the secret funds. The Russians could not be depended on for anything any more. And fifty roubles were worth only about one-third of what they had been worth a year before.

Lieutenant Gotthilf rose to eminence in these days. Lieutenant Gotthilf was a Zionist, and he maintained relations with a Russian private who was also a Zionist. This private had married in Khabarovsk, and had a prosperous barber's shop in the heart of the city. He extended small loans to those who were recommended to him by Gotthilf. But this lasted only for a few days, because Gotthilf was soon accused of treachery; they said he helped the hussar officers and aristocrats and not the Jews, whereupon Gotthilf declared that he was insulted and stopped recommending anybody.

Neither letters nor news came from home, and there was little in the Russian papers. It was high time for the messengers of an early peace to arrive. There were several among them who were spending their fourth summer in this hopeless captivity.

They staggered about all summer like flies in winter, in a bitter state of semi-drowsiness, filled with hopeless indifference. No one went to see the performance of "Typhoon," although it was an excellent production. Some Japanese from Khabarovsk staged the Japanese ceremonies and lent the ancient, heavy silk kimonos to the characters.

Everybody was putting his little belongings, his notes, in order, they all wanted to be ready when redemption came. They waited as never before for the soft-cushioned trains, in whose soft lap they were hoping to find rest.

Lieutenant Körös's little garden bloomed for the last time, the pupils in Professor Julius Papp's box conjugated the last verbs, Bartakovics no longer examined Dr. Szalay to ascertain what progress he had made in the new Criminal Code,

and Regimental Surgeon Szabo would soon finish his endless game of casino with Jóska Kaufmann. The poor Pick had already written home that he would like to have back his job as Assistant County Clerk, the rich Pick loudly announced that he would make a thorough overhaul of his timber-yard. Répássy at last finished the sliding rule on which he had been working for the past year and a half, Aspirant Juhász was feverishly copying the camp poems which he expected to recite at home at amateur theatricals. Many of them made peace with their enemies at the last moment and liquidated their affairs of honour in order that they should not be brought to a court of honour at home. Dantsek, the magician, tidied his workshop, and the bookbindery was busy binding the published numbers of the *Siberian Gazette* and the *Agitator*. The reservists even forgave the Regulars, the cavalry officers, and the aristocrats for their secret funds; they would not enjoy them for long anyway. Lányi collected subscriptions for a book to be written by one of the camp authors entitled "Messages from Far Away," the price would have to be paid only at home—

Thus passed the summer and, true to Siberian custom, the three-day Siberian autumn was all at once upon them. On the 20th of September, Captain Glattstein was still doing physical exercises early in the morning, as was his wont, all stark naked, but three days later it was snowing, and on the first of October everything was white. There was snow everywhere. Siberian snow, merciless and indomitable snow, snow which never thawed until late in the spring, snow which never aroused in them desires for the joys of winter, snow which spread out over hundreds of thousands of acres, snow in which all the prisoners' hopes were drowned, snow no one could wade across, snow that only the legendary train they were awaiting and which would not come could possibly conquer. One could not wrestle with snow, not with the Siberian snow; it was an invincible enemy and all hopes were put away until the spring. Only the buran blew over the steppes. They had to wait for spring.

They had to wait for the spring again, and they again be-

gan conjugating the verbs, and it seemed that "Jerusalem," the passion play by Mátè Zalka, would, after all, be produced. Although something was going on in the world. Simi Grosz read the paper and it appeared that something was going on!

"The Committee of the 12th Army, fully aware of the grave situation on the Northern Front, once more turns to the Empire, the People and the Government! All the achievements of the Revolution are at stake! Political and economical bankruptcy threatens the country, and not one item in the programme of the Revolution has been fulfilled! Internal politics are in a turmoil, and there is no unity in the foreign policy! The ruling classes' selfish desire for wealth is a red rag in the eyes of the working masses! Party interests and party struggles have reached the limit and are now verging on the edge of ordinary criminal acts! We are threatened with falling to pieces, and the Counter-Revolution is gaining apace! The Fleet and Army of German imperialism are preparing a new blow, the Empire is in great danger! And when we call on our soldiers to fight to the last drop of blood, we know very well that we call on naked men!"

There was anxiety on Waletzky's face and he came to the camp very often, sometimes with an escort, but more often alone, and in secret. He held long conversations with the commander. It was said that Waletzky had picked up a lot for himself, that his wallet was bulging with money embezzled from the camp, and that he was about to escape to America. News from the West became more and more encouraging, it seemed the Russians would not be able to hold out much longer.

It was not hard to maintain discipline in the camp. There were no more endless conversations, no one wanted anything, all of them surrendered to Fate, there was nothing to argue about, nothing could be done anyway. Although the gates were not open as yet, the Russian guard would let out anybody for a few kopecks, and although anybody could go wherever he pleased, no one felt like going. And no one noticed that Aspirant Pászkándy had been away for a week.

Only when he returned did they notice that he had been

out. His box-mates had said that he had gone away, but no one had cared to find out where to. This fellow Pászkándy was a sturdy, shrewd-eyed, clever young man, he rarely spoke much and never cared for the affairs of the camp. He must have been twenty-six or twenty-eight years old. Had he not worn the badges of an aspirant, one would have taken him for the ambitious eldest son of a rich peasant, or, perhaps, his foreman. He talked in a peasant dialect, smoked a long pipe, used phrases quite unknown to city folk, and swore at people a lot. His oaths were not bookish, they were good, racy, original, peasant oaths, genuine curses, which really made one angry; but whenever Pászkándy noticed that any one felt insulted, he slyly raised his eyebrows and smiled, and then you could see that he was merely joking.

When he arrived, he was tired and worn out. They asked him where he had been and what he had been doing.

As was his wont, he first smiled in his knowing manner, then said:

"I was across there in China. I heard there was good soil over there, I went over to see what kind of soil it was. It is fine. You can do whatever you want with it. I stayed with a Russian family and I think I am going to marry into the family. I'd have been married by this time, anyway, if I hadn't been called up. The farmer has a good-looking daughter, and they live among the Chinese very peacefully. Only there aren't many Russians over there. They were very glad to see me. I told them I was a Hungarian, but that didn't make much difference to them. They'll let me marry Marusa, they are glad that I'm going to marry her. We'll wait until everything is in order and then we'll come back to Siberia. I told them I wouldn't mind staying there either, the Chinese are peaceful folk and the soil is the same everywhere. Well, we'll see. I haven't got anybody at home, here I'm going to have land and farm, I'll be my own master. I'll have such a farm that the Chinese will come from near and far to wonder at it. They can teach me a lot of things and I can teach them a lot of things. Have you ever heard anything like this, they hoe the wheat! And they say it has ears as fat as my fist and a very long stalk. I'm very anxious

to find out whether that's true. I'll find it out next year. And now I'm going to leave you—God help you home—"

"You're mad, Pászkándy. Why? You could get a rich peasant girl at home, too, you don't have to go to China for that! If you'd only stay here in Russia—"

"At home? You are mad yourself. How could I marry a peasant girl at home? I, De Pászkándy, born a gentleman? At the most, I could marry a postmistress, and I myself should have to take a small clerical a job with the county administration. Just leave it to me, I know what I'm doing. And then again, where is that going home of yours, when will it be?—I don't want to wait any longer, I want to hoe and plough next summer. We have three thousand sheep and forty oxen—can you tell me what farmer has that many at home? And the man who has that many at home isn't waiting for me to marry his daughter!"

Some one informed the command of Pászkándy's plan and he was brought up before the commanding officer. The major reprimanded him for entertaining such ideas. It was the duty of the command to look after every man and to prevent such madness. For the time being he would get three days' solitary confinement. He would forget his adventurous ideas in the cell.

Pászkándy was locked up, and the guards were given strict orders not to let him pass the gate.

Pászkándy smiled and the iron bars of the cell's window were found loosened the next morning. The prisoner had vanished from the camp.

CHAPTER LXII

PÁSZKÁNDY'S escape was the last offence committed in the camp. Venice fell and the Bolsheviki triumphed in Moscow, and these two events greatly strengthened the faith in the command. The fall of Venice was celebrated with a dinner. The dinner was given by the command and the expenses were met out of the secret funds. A delegate from the "*Baubezirk*" delivered a speech which was roundly

applauded, the applause was especially deafening when he said: "Our enemies lie crushed at our victorious feet—"

The fall of Venice proved that military discipline and unity had brought the desired fruits, that manly virtues had been triumphant, that absolute faith and trust in the Supreme Command had been victorious. On the other hand, the Bolshevik programme, which culminated in the slogan "Down with War," had brought about the complete collapse of the Russian armies. Soon the gigantic Russian forces would be completely disrupted, and then the prisoners could go home. Then they would certainly have to render an account of their acts in captivity, and the soldiers who had won the splendid victories would certainly know how to deal with those who were undermining authority, discipline and order.

That was why these two events were of such great importance from the point of view of the camp, although no new orders, no new warnings were necessary. The Bolsheviki's victory and the fall of Venice were the glorious triumphs of the camp-command's foreign policy. On the one side, there was the great example of military virtues, and on the other, the warning finger of disorder and lack of discipline. Lo, the terrifying Russian armies had collapsed and the country was at the mercy of the victors. The Bolsheviki would beg for peace now, but it would be a humiliating peace. The terms were to be dictated by the victors.

"It would be fatal if we were not able to maintain order among ourselves. The Russians neglect us, they don't care about us. If we don't keep together, if we don't take every precaution, we shall fall apart like sheaves cut loose—"

It was incredible what the Russians did. Waletzky staggered about with a grotesque grin on his lips, he wandered about quite helplessly, one could almost say he stole his way about the camp. He displayed no badges of rank, indeed, sometimes he appeared in civilian clothes. He no longer gave commands, he was just curious to know what was going to happen.

The Russian soldiers no longer obeyed him. One day,

there was only a single sentry at the gate, the rest of them were on strike, and when the command sent for Waletzky, he was unwilling to come. He told them to let him alone.

But they could not very well let it go at that, and the commanders of the three camps conferred together. And when Waletzky continued to disregard their repeated requests, and would not come, they got in touch with a lieutenant who had hitherto been in charge of the guard only.

The first lieutenant was a Russian and, so it seemed, he knew more about the situation than the Polish Waletzky. He declared himself willing to take over the command of the camps on behalf of the Russians, but only if the prisoners would see to his own and the soldiers' pay.

The commanders of the three camps, after long and embittered arguments, finally reached a solution.

Now they saw how useful it was to have the funds.

They bribed the Khabarovsk military authorities, and the Russians expressed willingness to continue to pay the prisoners as well as the lieutenant. But the Russians would not hear of paying the guard under any circumstances. They said they did not want to deal with the soldiers. They were ready to supply uniforms and arms, but they did not want either to give commands to them or to talk with them. Finally, the question was solved with the help of the lieutenant, a very clever man. He recruited deserters who dared not go home to European Russia because of the winter. These mercenaries were ready to guard the camp for food, some underwear, and a little money. The officers' meeting unanimously voted the expenses, and the camp at last had guards.

Some suggested that the mercenaries could have been recruited from among their own miserable soldiers, too. The suggestion, however, was wholly impossible. The command did not want so to humiliate the captive privates as to give them arms to guard their own officers. And then again, they would have been unable to maintain order for, in point of fact, every single prisoner would have been the superior of his own guard. The Russian lieutenant's

idea proved to be excellent, the paid guards behaved very well, they didn't want to risk their jobs, not until the spring anyway.

Thus the winter passed and captive fingers again glided over the keys of blind pianos, and the wireless telegraph machines of the boxes, sending no messages anywhere and receiving none, were rattling again. Some of them were even thinking out new inventions.

Norbert Siska, for instance, transformed his box into a medieval, fortified castle. He had been working on it for three years and at last it was ready. Cardboard walls, with battlements and a drawbridge, surrounded the box. Iron bolts were painted on the cardboard door, and when the master was at home, the tower flew a banner decorated with the family coat-of-arms. When a visitor arrived, he first knocked on the door with a cane hanging on a chain woven out of cord, and then waited until the seneschal, after ascertaining by looking through an iron grill that the visitor was a friend, let down the drawbridge. When the banner was not flying no one could enter, the seneschal would not let anybody in: the master was not home, he was patrolling the countryside with his faithful lancers.

At night, Simi Grosz read about the one hundred and fifty-three fronts of the Russian civil war, of the fights in Moscow and in the provinces, of the advance of the victorious troops of the Central Powers, and of the Bolsheviki's constantly repeated offers of peace.

On the whole, the prisoners were in favour of signing the peace, but the command gravely weighed the chances and held out for reparations. Now that victory is in our hands, it would be a gross mistake to let its advantages pass out of our grasp. Such an opportunity will not soon offer itself again, and the Russians will have to pay for our losses in men, money and equipment. In money, or in kind, or, possibly, in territory, but reparations will have to be paid.

But it was not Simi Grosz who read to them the news of the peace of Brest-Litovsk. One day Cornet Orosz came earlier than usual with the orders of the day. He came immediately after lunch, and before there was time to be

surprised at this unusual occurrence, he was already reading a brief account of the great event. The command informed them that the Central Powers had signed a separate peace treaty with Russia, and, therefore, the command advised the prisoners to prepare themselves for their return home, which, it was to be expected, would soon follow the signing of peace. Of course, the Russian papers announced only very briefly the (for them) deplorable news, hence the command was not in a position to inform them of the terms. If, however, the news was reliable, the Dual Monarchy would get Russian Poland in lieu of reparations.

Uncle Hegyi said that he would not believe it until after the train took him home and put him down at Homonna or Kassa. Norbert Siska immediately raised the banner with the coat-of-arms, Cornet Juhász hurled his cap in the air, and Lieutenant Schenk, for the first time after so many melancholy years, strummed the military march on his guitar. The boxes were swarming with excitement, the men started to pack, the price of dictionaries, books, paints, brushes and balalaikas suddenly dropped. Only the last named were still somewhat in demand because there were many who wanted to take them home as souvenirs.

But the news of the peace of Brest-Litovsk did not cause unalloyed joy. At first they didn't even think of it, but then an Austrian aspirant's remark created unpleasant excitement:

"*Weiter dienen, Kameraden—*"

That was true. If there was only separate peace, they would have to go on fighting. The various other fronts were still there. They would still have to go to the Italian, or to the French, front. Why, going home would be worse than staying here! Anton Klehr immediately declared that he had not the slightest intention of going home, he would have plenty of time to do so after the whole thing was safely over. As a matter of fact, the peace came at a most inopportune time. A separate peace had no sense at all: if there was peace, why wasn't there peace everywhere? This was no real peace, this meant peace to the Russian soldiers only. Everybody was excited, rebellious, and many bitter

remarks were heard against the command: "The command will take advantage of the situation. The peace is only the beginning of discipline. The command will render such reports as it likes and those who are at odds with the clique will be immediately sent to the front."

The men were embittered and went to bed distressed. The anxious silence was suddenly broken by Lieutenant Wecker's stentorian voice:

"What are the revolutionaries going to do now? Why are they so silent?"

And it was also Lieutenant Wecker who informed them the next day, with considerable malice in his voice, that the command had summoned Waletzky, that Waletzky, hiding in Khabarovsk, had refused to come, and that a patrol, composed of Russian soldiers, of mercenaries, had been sent for him. The command wished to explain to Waletzky that inasmuch as the peace treaty gave Warsaw to the Central Powers, he as a Pole ought now to be in the camp. Waletzky was informed that he could no longer be treated as an exception, such action would create ill-feeling, and he was bidden to move to the camp at once.

The affair took a surprising turn. Waletzky acknowledged the command's wish and gave his word of honour that as soon as he could attend to his affairs, that is to say, within two days, he would move to the "*Baubezirk*" and share the fate of the other prisoners of war.

But, in two days, there was no trace of Waletzky; he had fled with his family to America. It would certainly have been highly imprudent for him to go to Warsaw, where we were the masters and where he would have had to answer for his misdeeds. . . .

As soon as the cold abated, enterprising Chinamen appeared outside the camp and began to build small huts, primitive, wooden shacks. They had heard that the prisoners were now permitted to go down to the village, and they fitted out these huts as miniature brothels. The command warned the younger gentlemen of the dangers inherent in visits to these huts. Nevertheless, a constant pilgrimage went on. A lieutenant took down all his belongings

to one of the huts and hired it for a full day. He paid with his overcoat, his Chinese quilt, all his Baikal picture-cards, with everything he had, but the Chinaman wanted more. And he took the lieutenant's notebooks, too, and his forty sheets of clean paper, for one day's rent.

When his day was up, the lieutenant was cold, sick and tired, but he said that now he would not mind even if he died. It was worth it. The command held him up as an example, and pointed out the sad consequences of senseless licence, but the exodus went on. They went down in hordes, and the belongings of the prisoners diminished rapidly. Some of them made incredible purchases. Cornet Leehr, for instance, wasted three pairs of underwear on a Buddha statue. An enterprising Chinaman sold it to him in the village. But all this would not have been so bad had the case of Andor Mohay not come up.

Andor Mohay was a settled, dignified, and disciplined man, he was proud of his commission as captain in the Reserve Corps, but the sudden liberty went to his head. He did not need to pay for his trysts with Chinese quilts and winter boots, because he had sewn gold twenty-kronen pieces in his collar before he had left home. Everybody knew that Andor Mohay's threadbare tunic was worth more than Cornet Bleiweiss's silver-fox coat. Now he merely took a few gold pieces out of his collar and went down to the Ussuri three days in succession. Nothing would have happened had Mohay not got drunk on the third day. The news that he was drunk spread like wildfire, and many of them ran to the gate to watch him coming home reeling, with scrambled eggs all over his trousers. The Chinaman had wanted to clean them, but he wouldn't let him do it. He said to the Chinaman:

"Let it alone, do you think I am ashamed of it? Do you think there's any shame in eating scrambled eggs?"

Thus Mr. Mohay came home after his great debauch; but Major Füzessi had heard of the scandal and went down to the gate to meet him. He wanted to take him to his own room so that he should not have to go through the big rooms, he wanted to keep the scandalous incident a secret

from the younger gentlemen.

But Mr. Mohay was in high spirits and he pushed the major out of his way:

"What's that, old chap? Are you all like the Chinaman? Is it so shameful to eat scrambled eggs nowadays, eh? Get out of my way—"

They could not restrain him. He staggered round the camp and proudly boasted to everybody of the scrambled eggs. True, scrambled eggs had become a rare dish, and they were as envious of him as if he had boasted of a twenty-carat diamond.

But the command took the scandal to heart, and although Andor Mohay, Captain in the Reserve Corps, got off very lightly—he proved that he had committed the grave breach of discipline in an unconscious state of mind —leaves were now less easily granted. Especially the younger gentlemen were being looked after, although they could only go for walks, because they had neither money nor belongings to spare. The younger gentlemen were the ones to suffer, despite the fact that most of the outrages had been committed by the older element.

CHAPTER LXIII

As spring advanced, more and more prisoners disappeared. Not many, compared to the many thousands of them, but, all of a sudden, Béla Fabian was nowhere to be seen, and Vidor Elek, editor of the *Siberian Az Est*, the newspaper in the "Seven," had also vanished. What hurt them most was that the runaways had said nothing of their plans to anybody. One day they had been talking with them and the next day they were already on their way home. One could only suspect that they had raised money somewhere, perhaps in the Khabarovsk pharmacy. Their sudden disappearance was most unpleasant to their friends and box-mates, they had to listen to malicious remarks, such as: "Why didn't he tell you anything about it? He is your best friend, why didn't he take you along too?"

Jóska Kaufmann made no secret of his departure. He politely informed them that he was about to go, ordered a Chinaman to wait for him at the gate of the camp with a cart, took leave of his friends, and, with incredible calmness, announced that he had to go to the station now, because he didn't want to miss the train. Of course everybody laughed. They thought he was joking. What did it matter now whether he left in a day or in a week? But no! Jóska Kaufmann, so related those who accompanied him to the station to see him off, bought himself cigars and papers, sat down in a second-class compartment, lighted a cigar, opened a paper, looked at his watch and said:

"Can it be that the train is late?"

Incredible! He went home from Siberia as if he had merely gone on a business trip to Halmi. It seemed so utterly impossible that anybody who wanted to go home needed nothing but money and could then board a train at once. Going home had been such a distant dream for years that all this seemed like a bad joke. They shook their heads even at the letters their returning comrades sent from Moscow. The whole thing seemed so desperate that only a few men dared undertake it. It was contrary to all reason that it should be so easy and simple—It was simply impossible—

The command did not prohibit them from going home. Anybody could go who proved that he had the money. Of course some of them had so much money that even if it had been prohibited they could have bribed everybody and left the camp with ease. But there was another reason for the command's lax attitude. All over Eastern Siberia, the Reds were already masters and it was an open secret that the Reds were willing to listen to complaints against the command. The Reds were just aching to interfere with the internal affairs of the camp. Indeed, it was more than a mere rumour, because, one day, *Tovarishch* Nasok, with a huge red button on his chest, a red ribbon on his arm and a red cockade on his cap, appeared in the camp.

Tovarishch Nasok was a well-built, good-humoured, half intelligent Russian worker, a clever, shrewd man. He was

not irascible at all. Jovially he gave orders that he wanted to speak to the prisoners.

The major referred to the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, which acknowledged the Central Powers as victors, and protested by the right of the victor against the Bolsheviki's intention of contaminating the spirit of the camp with Red propaganda. The internal affairs of every country are sacred and he would not let anybody interfere with them.

Tovarishch Nasok did not fly into a rage. He said he was not quite sure whether the Brest-Litovsk Treaty included this, but he, as Commissar of the Amur Province ordered the meeting to be held. The major might defend himself at home by saying that he surrendered only to force and that he protested. He realized that it was the major's duty to protest, and he would not hold that against him. He shouldered all responsibility for whatever consequences might follow as a result of impairing the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. The major realized the truth of this and ordered the officers to gather.

The camp was trembling with excitement when *Tovarishch* Nasok climbed on to a table in the common-room and, in impassioned, stirring tones, addressed the ragged, musty, and worn prisoners of war:

"The flame of the Revolution is burning high in Russia, and the Revolution is ready to embrace you, too, who were prisoners here under the Czar's yoke. It brings you freedom and it is willing to place the keys of your prison in your own hands.

"From the western border of Russia to Vladivostok, the prisoners of the past may now fly out of the jails, fly through the tormenting iron bars, they may soar freely over the free Russian fields. All our former enemies who have been suffering in the murderous prisons of Omsk, Tomsk, Irkutsk, Khabarovsk, Stretensk, Krasnoyarsk, Berezovka and Troitsk, may now leave their dungeons. They were our enemies but now they are our brothers, protected by the flag of liberty—"

Three faint hurrahs were heard at this point and the speaker looked around, a little embarrassed. He thought

the prisoners would shed tears of happiness, and he was disagreeably surprised.

But then he realized what the trouble was. He smiled. Of course, only a few of the prisoners understood what he was saying. He dropped his oratorical tone and asked in his ordinary voice whether anybody who spoke Russian would kindly interpret his speech. The major immediately winked to a captain, the captain winked back, and began to translate *Tovarishch* Nasok's speech:

"The Commissar assures the prisoners of his best intentions. He is very satisfied with your behaviour, and is especcially glad to see that you have kept yourself aloof from things which are none of your business. The hour of liberation is at hand, and if you continue to respect discipline and obey your commanders, you will soon be off on your way home. The prisoners who have been suffering in the camps of Omsk, Tomsk, Irkutsk, Khabarovsk, Stretensk, Krasnoyarsk, Berezovka and Troitsk will soon start home, to join their loved ones at home—"

The officers responded with enthusiastic cheers, and *Tovarishch* Nasok continued with tears in his voice:

"Don't your hearts beat faster when you see the self-sacrificing armies who fight for liberty in Russia, when you see the awakening consciousness of a people throwing off their yoke? This is a historical moment, for the peoples of the world to rise with primordial force and break the physical and spiritual locks of their jails!"

Tovarishch Nasok stopped so that the captain could interpret his words.

"Don't your hearts beat faster at the thought of being again able to grasp the sword that has been twisted out of your hands, at the thought of once more proudly marching—"

At this point something happened. Simi Grosz smiled and *Tovarishch* Nasok immediately noticed this involuntary expression of amusement.

He looked grave, beckoned to Simi Grosz, and took out his revolver.

"I command you to translate word for word the follow-

ing: My words have been falsely interpreted to you. Translate it!"

Simi Grosz translated:

"Mr. Nasok forces me at the point of a revolver to translate to you that what he said was not interpreted correctly to you."

Tovarishch Nasok watched the faces and he saw that Simi Grosz had stammered the truth. He continued:

"Translate to the prisoners, that they are so suppressed that I cannot hope that they will ever understand my words. Say it!"

Simi Grosz said it, and *Tovarishch* Nasok continued:

"Tell them that I have nothing to say to slaves, let them keep their chains. I neither like them nor am I angry at them. They simply don't matter. Say it!"

Simi Grosz said that too. *Tovarishch* Nasok continued:

"Tell them, God help them back to the slaughterhouse. I hope they will soon be there—"

He had to say it, because Nasok had a revolver in his hand and because he watched the eyes and faces.

Tovarishch Nasok bowed and went away. He did not even turn his head.

When the revolutionary left, Major Füzessi rose to speak. He gave thanks to God that the Russian had been unsuccessful, he praised the self-control of the prisoners, who had restrained themselves from insulting the demagogue. Such an irresponsible revolutionary might have carried away some of the prisoners, especially the younger gentlemen; he might have led them into some rash enterprise. Indeed, the Russian had been right, the war was still going on at home, and he hoped that soon the noble steel would once more glisten pure and clean in their liberated hands on the field of honour.

The prisoners responded with enthusiastic applause, cheers and hurrahs to the brave major's words.

The meeting was now transformed into an officers' meeting and he continued his speech in his capacity as commander of the camp.

"The command strictly forbids the prisoners to undertake

the so-called journey home. It is doubtful whether such experiments would be successful, but even if they were, it doesn't make much difference, because we must act together and in the interest of the community. Isolated experiments are no help to the community. For the next two weeks, leaves will be issued only in moderation because, I may as well inform you in all confidence, the commander of the three camps will escape this week. He is fully equipped with all the necessities for an escape, consequently he will be successful and as soon as he gets home he will be able to help us. This is his aim. Either all of us or none! The commander of the three camps, Colonel Mitteräger, will escape in order to help all of us home. Of course, the command will continue to do everything in its power to find ways and means to help all of us home."

CHAPTER LXIV

IT seemed that the *Amurskaya Zhizn* also lived on *Lavka* news. Half of the paper was full of news which the other half denied. One could not find out at all what was true and what was not. Now it said that General Hoffmann was advancing on Moscow at the head of the White Guard. Another telegram said that the Germans had crossed the new frontier, that they did not respect the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, and that the populace was receiving them everywhere with joy. They didn't know why the Germans had crossed the frontier or who General Hoffmann was. To judge by his name, he was a German, but, in that case, what was he doing in Pskov? The paper was a mess of confused news, as if it had been compiled from gossip picked up by the refugees who stopped in the city for a few days on their way to the East. The command warned them not to believe the news and telegrams of the *Amurskaya Zhizn* unreservedly, because one of its greatest sensations, duly celebrated by the camp, namely, the fall of Venice, had proved to be untrue.

The command accepted but one certain fact: the Treaty

of Brest-Litovsk. Of course, with the modification that Warsaw would not be given to the Monarchy in lieu of reparations, but that there would be an independent Polish Republic.

The future of the camp, therefore, rested on the treaty and after a while, the Russians also accepted this as a fact. The overwhelming majority of the camp behaved accordingly. This meant that one could not very well become friendly with smugglers on the Amur, as Waletzky had done. They had to behave like officers, because the treaty had strengthened discipline at home.

Tovarishch Nasok might have been right about the slaughterhouse, nevertheless they were not surprised to hear that *Rittmeister* Liev had been highly insulted when a lieutenant had addressed him as captain.

To sum it up: the camp accepted the peace of Brest-Litovsk as a fact. The Russian authorities in the Amur Province also accepted this fact as the basis of negotiations. Consequently the prisoners had the right to go home. On the other hand the prisoners were supposed to obey their commanders even more than before. It was only logical therefore that Lieutenant Páll could not possibly let Cornet Kresméry salute him with his left hand, and ordered him to repeat the salute.

Neither could one ask where the colonel got the money to go home. Was it given to him from the secret funds? It could not be asked, however, because his escape was no longer considered as a private affair but as an act done in the service of the Fatherland. For it was of the utmost importance that the prisoners, eighty per cent. of whom were fit to continue the fight, should get home as soon as possible.

The colonel took with him a fountain pen filled with chemical ink, and his letters had only to be warmed to find out he was proceeding according to schedule.

Of course, the command was not waiting idly in the meantime. With the help of the remaining secret funds and stores, and with the aid of Heedbloom and Conger, they convinced the military authorities of Khabarovsk that there was no point in keeping them there. And long before help from

home could have arrived, barely two weeks after the departure of the colonel, it was agreed that a thousand men would be sent home at once. The gates were thrown open once more, the command gave full freedom to everybody. Anybody who wanted to go by himself was permitted to do so. Similarly, whoever wanted to remain in the city until the departure of the next train might do so also.

Finally, in the middle of April, on an unforgettable day, reports came from the station that several cattle trucks had arrived. Indubitably, they were for the prisoners.

An officers' meeting was held, and Major Füzessi, deeply moved, informed them that the first train would start in two days.

"Hurrah!" yelled the prisoners, but Major Füzessi disapprovingly shook his grey head and said:

"You shouldn't say 'Hurrah,' my boys, you should say, 'Thank God'—"

The prisoners yelled, "Thank God," and in two days they actually left the camp behind, where but a few months ago the deserter Waletzky had been their supreme commander.

The dream-train was racing with them homeward, the magic train was taking them home. It had no soft cushions, and the chilly wind of the Siberian spring blew in through the cracks. But it was homeward bound. . . .

The cattle trucks were stolen or scrounged, they slept on shelves one above another, the brakes were broken, the axles rusty, but they were homeward bound. . . .

Everything was left behind, in the intoxication of going home they forgave each other everything, and trembling and shuddering they watched lest anything should stop them.

They put their own men on the engine to control and supervise the drunken Russian engineers and brakesmen. They were immediately promoted and they were promised that they would be richly rewarded at home for their brave behaviour in the enemy country.

The train raced madly down the slopes of the Stretenska

hills, it raced wildly down breath-taking curves, down towards the steppe. Then, all of a sudden, in the middle of the night, Schnabel, in one of the centre coaches, began to swing a burning torch. Stop! But the train could not stop, all the brakes were out of order, the burning axles of Schnabel's coach screeched horrifyingly in the night, and, in a few seconds, another burning axle rent the silence with its sharp, shrill hiss—

They yelled from one car to another, but nothing could be done: the mad train raced unrestrained down the curves and sped on screaming, screeching, creaking—

A thousand prisoners stood in the open doorways ready to jump, unwilling to die—

The train sped on capriciously and insanely, with steadily increasing velocity down the steep grades, it raced stubbornly and with set teeth into the unknown—

At last they reached the plains and began to breathe more easily, although they could not stop the train even at the next station, they only yelled desperate signals to the station master—If only they did not run into a waiting engine or a train coming from the opposite direction within the next hour they were saved—

The train came to a stop in an open field beyond a little Manchu station. They waited a few minutes, to rest their shattered nerves, then the train backed to the deserted station.

It was wise to do so because, in a few seconds, the Vladivostok Express arrived. It would have been highly unpleasant to meet it on their way.

It was Haertl's cunning brains that enabled them to continue their journey with a good engine. He simply bought the engine of the Vladivostok Express from its engineer. He gave five pounds of American tobacco out of the reserve stores to the drunken engineer, and the Russian was willing to exchange the excellent engine of the express for the battered steam-boiler of the prisoners' train. For five pounds of tobacco. The express had stopped at the little station where the exchange took place to take in water.

CHAPTER LXV

SWEATERS, Japanese socks, American face powder and Conger's yellow American tobacco threw, dragged, and stole the train from one station to another. Frightened and excited, they watched, wondering if they would be able to reach Chita, whether they would be able to go on from Chita, whether they would be able to talk sense to Vili Karendos, the dreaded Bolshevik leader, provided he was still in Chita, whether they would be able to steal through Semianov's empire, whether they would be able to steal across the entire Eastern Hemisphere without creating any extraordinary commotion.

As they approached the Baikal, the uncertainty and doubt grew from minute to minute. From the minute they left Manchuria, they met Red guardsmen at every station, but the guardsmen seemed to be decent fellows, who even gave them advice, and the terrifying men of whom Simi Grosz had been reading incredible stories all the winter long behaved very sympathetically.

Here and there, there were Hungarians among the guardsmen, and they talked to their former superiors somewhat nervously but quite respectfully. They explained their actions in but few words.

"We've joined up, Lieutenant, we've joined up, and now we are going to stick it out—"

"But why did you do it, so far away from home, in a foreign country—"

"We worked in the mines in knee-high water—we worked in the villages like lousy dogs, we starved and had no clothes —they whipped us—Now we are free—It can't be any worse—"

But there were others who spoke sarcastically to the officers, who said that neither were the officers awaited at home with laurel wreaths, that there were proletarians among the officers, too, that they, too, would want to come back here where the Red Guard fought for the Freedom

of the World—

"But so far away from home—to fight in a foreign country—"

"Don't you have to fight at home, too? Is there no war at home, either? But here we fight for the freedom of the workers, here we fight for ourselves—"

One could not convince them. Anyway the command prohibited conversation with them. And there wasn't much time to explain things.

Then there were those who talked defiantly, impertinently with the officers.

"Don't you feel like putting me in chains now, Mister Lieutenant? Don't you want to force me to lick the dust at the point of a revolver? Go your way and let us alone—"

There were many kinds of Red guardsmen. There were some who stole to the train just when it was about to start, to give them a pound of sugar or a package of tea, and a letter also, which they wrote in a hurry, in pencil, a letter of a few warm, yearning words to their beloved at home, who begged with their eyes to deliver it, who put their tanned, skinny fingers to their lips begging them not to say anything to the authorities, that it was not necessary to repeat at home that they were serving in the Red Guard, in Kuenga—

It was difficult to understand why they wanted to fight for the Freedom of the World in Siberia. Why was it so important to settle the struggle between capital and labour in Siberia, of all places? But these were such easy questions that even the simplest of the guardsmen could answer them. The centre of the World Revolution was in Russia, and its front was united. No matter where the Red guardsman fought, he fought everywhere for the same aims. That was what they said. They all had the answers prepared.

It was indubitable that their revolutionary vocabulary and knowledge were larger than those of the prisoners, and therefore they soon gave up arguing with them. Soon they learned that the best thing was to let them have everything their own way. After all, they did not want to anger the Reds, they were glad that they let them go. Their aim

was to go home, and not to convert the Reds.

At a station near the Baikal, a Hungarian was the military commandant of the station, *Tovarishch* Szilágyi. But he was in civilian clothes, and if he had not carried a revolver in his belt the commandant would have looked like an ordinary civilian. He was a clean-shaven, bony, pale man, and very strict.

He examined the papers minutely and kept the train waiting for a long time. Then he ordered the train commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Sivó, to appear before him. He let him wait in the anteroom. The lieutenant-colonel waited patiently for half an hour. Then *Tovarishch* Szilágyi brought out a little table, put the papers on it and began to examine him. He addressed the lieutenant-colonel as "Mr. Sivó" and when he, in turn, called him "Mr. Szilágyi" he waved it disparagingly aside and said: "Please call me *Tovarishch* Szilágyi, Comrade Szilágyi."

Finally he told the commander not to let his men get mixed up with any counter-revolutionary movement; as far as he was concerned he would let them go on, the papers being in order.

CHAPTER LXVI

THE dream-train was racing across Siberian steppes. The dream-train raced with drunken engineers and returning prisoners shivering with the fever of anticipation. They did not know as yet whether they were heroes or fools, but they went on, towards some holy dream, something far away, something that was waiting for them beyond the Buriat lands, the Bashkir fields, beyond the Chunguz homes. . . .

At the stations they met trains crowded with Czechs, with trains of Czech legionaries. They loitered about in their green Russian uniforms. No one knew what they wanted, not even they themselves. They dared not go home now because they had surrendered the flanks, because they had surrendered to the Russians, because they had been fighting, for years, against Austria-Hungary. The peace of Brest-

Litovsk had brought them nothing. The Bolsheviki informed them they were no longer needed, they might go home. They set out to go eastward, without knowing why and whither, they just hoped that something would happen. They were left their uniforms, and every company was left twenty rifles in order that they might defend themselves on their way. The Bolsheviki gave them trains, and now they were going east, without any plans, into the unknown. They were not needed here, and they could not go home because they would have to answer charges of high treason. They would have to answer for having left the flanks exposed, for having fought against their own country, they could not go home.

The prisoners who were now proudly going home looked challengingly at the Czechs. They glared at the sad Czechs in Russian uniforms, who differed from the Russians only in that they wore puttees instead of boots.

They wore puttees instead of boots, and they had nailed little aeroplanes and windmills to the roofs of the goods trucks, and the propellers of the little aeroplanes and the sails of the little windmills turned when the Siberian wind blew. And there was a little clown also on the roof of one van, one of his legs was painted blue, the other one black, and he did all sorts of tricks. He turned merrily on the horizontal bar when the wind blew.

They had painted big white eagles on the sides of the trucks, and the portraits of heroes famous in Czech history, but no one knew what the white eagles or the heroes wanted in Siberia.

The names of little villages were written on the sides of trucks in chalk, simple and heartrending names of villages, to which they could never again return—

And inscriptions too: "Hail, Prague in our name, give our love to all those people and things we mournfully remember—"

There were errands the happy prisoners going home were supposed to attend to, greetings they were supposed to deliver, but they were not permitted to talk with the Czechs, they were not permitted to acknowledge the errands. They were not permitted even to look at the merry windmills of

the sad Czechs for long: they had surrendered the flanks, they had fought with the enemy—It served them right—

The prisoners' train went on, and the Czechs with their sorrows and doubts were left behind.

They went on towards their distant goal and they passed the smaller stations without trouble. The command was reorganized, a new train commander was elected, a captain instead of the lieutenant-colonel. Haertl, alas, remained with them.

CHAPTER LXVII

THE train was again racing in the Urals and they awaited, with growing hopes, the famous pillar which divides Asia from Europe. The pillar was faithfully waiting for them, and they greeted it as if it had been an old friend, as if home had been immediately beyond it. Europe was greeting them, she came to the border to welcome them. Europe welcomed her long-lost children—

In Ufa, a small city in the Urals, the Reds bothered surprisingly little with them. They did not pay any attention to them. When they reported their arrival, the Reds stared at them, not knowing what they wanted, what they were there for.

The Commissar did not even want to speak to them. He was busy with other things, with more important things.

And they learned that the Reds were in a tight corner. A powerful White army was standing on the Volga and bitter battles were being fought for Suzram and the Volga bridge. It was unpleasant to hear this, because their route led in that direction. They wondered how they could steal through the various fronts without being noticed.

It seemed so inconceivable that now after ten thousand versts, in the last few miles, at the threshold of liberty, things should go amiss. It was simply incredible.

They had been accustomed to having difficulties, accustomed to fighting their way through, accustomed to arguing

and to bribing, and now they did not know what to do with all the freedom that had suddenly been forced upon them. No one blocked their way, no one sent them on, no one said anything. The command therefore ordered that in view of the suspicious circumstances the train would wait in Ufa for two days.

But one Red patrol did come to inspect the train. They looked into every car, joked with the prisoners and bought from them international post-cards for a few lumps of sugar. Because this patrol was also composed of Hungarians.

They stopped when they reached the last three trucks containing Haertl's provisions. They wanted them to be opened. Haertl tried to explain to them, with a saccharine smile on his lips, that the trucks contained a few things only, not much, just a little provision for the *tovarishch* officers.

"Open them!"

Lieutenant Haertl willingly opened them. He said:

"You will see I spoke the truth."

The Red patrol acknowledged that Lieutenant Haertl had spoken the truth, but then the leader declared that he was not permitted to let military equipment pass through the city, he was commanded to confiscate it.

"These are clothes, *tovarishch*, and not military equipment. Clothes —"

The Reds explained to Lieutenant Haertl that clothes were the most important military equipment. Then they asked him whether these provisions were intended to be used by Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war.

"Why, certainly, they are for the Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war—"

"Well, and how about us? How about us, who have not received anything from home for four years? We have been waiting for these things for four years. Don't we deserve it? Do the ranks deserve no relief parcels? Answer!"

Haertl bowed his head and silently acknowledged that the ranks were also entitled to relief parcels.

"Very well," the leader of the Red patrol continued, "the ranks hereby gratefully acknowledge receipt of relief

parcels, from home—"

And they were already issuing orders to detach the three trucks and to shunt them to a Red siding. The Reds also lived in trucks and the steel tracks of the Reds' and the Czechs' and the prisoners' trains stood peacefully side by side. These were not separated by principles and theories.

The command was crippled and deprived of its strength, it had nothing left to bribe with. The Reds took everything away. A few rebellious prisoners declared that it was just as well that it happened as it did, for after all it was their own soldiers who got the stuff and not the Russians.

Up to now, the command had constantly distributed money among them. This practice was stopped now. Then some of them accused the command of keeping for itself what money there was left. Because it was inconceivable, they said, that everything should have been given out.

The command, on the other hand, permitted them to go to town, to try to get loans from private citizens. The command intended to get in touch with the local Danish Consul, too; perhaps he could help them.

They scattered in all directions. Ufa, a small Tatar town, spread on top of a little hill. Most of them went up there. But there were many who took their haversacks and headed for the neighbouring villages. They said they would try the Tatar peasants. They were said to be very kind-hearted people.

He went to the city. He entered a dairy in the chief street and sat down. He waited for somebody to step up to him and say:

"Well, my dear friend, Mr. Prisoner, I see that you are in great distress, here is money for you, take it—"

He looked out through the window, through the window of a little dairy in a Tatar city. Twilight was falling, and from a window across the street, candlelight beckoned to him. Candles lighted in pairs, just like the Friday evening candles in Jewish houses at home, the symbol of Sabbath, flickered unobtrusively and modestly.

He decided to go to that house.

They were not surprised at all when the wanderer en-

tered the room. They found it quite natural that he should come to them for supper, they acted as if they had been waiting for him. They brought an extra chair to the table and a plateful of goose soup was put before him.

After supper, he wanted to bring up the question of money, but his host smiled and said that he could not discuss money matters on the Sabbath. As soon as the Sabbath was over, however, he would be at his disposal. He hoped they could reach an agreement. They made a bed for him, and placed a candle on a chair next to his bed. Perhaps he liked to read before falling to sleep. They told him he should not bother about blowing out the candle, it had to burn down of itself, on account of the Sabbath.

They put Turgeniev's "Torrents of Spring" on the chair, but in spite of his two years in Russia he could not read it. Nevertheless, he picked up the book and stared at it for a long time. He stared at the book in his hands. Here he was, in Russia, in a Tatar city called Ufa, in a soft bed, with "Torrents of Spring" in the original, here he was in Turgeniev's country. How had it all come about?

The host had two daughters who asked very warmly after his family. They promised to help him home to his wife and child, only they had to wait for the Sabbath to end. They told him that if it was merely a question of money he was not to worry.

When evening came, the girls explained the matter to their father, and the old man nodded. He told him that the girls would attend to it.

The next day, the girls took him to a Tatar village. On the way they informed him that when they came here the first thing they did was to learn the Tatar language. Now they spoke Tatar very fluently. The Tatars would give him money, for they were afraid of Bolshevism, and they wanted to have their money in undisturbed European countries.

When they reached the village, the girls called together a regular mass meeting. The younger one, Liza Monheit, stood on a chair and delivered a speech. She told the Tatars that this honourable foreign officer was willing to take out

with him several thousand roubles. She had persuaded him only with difficulty to visit this village too. An old Tatar, who wanted to send his son to Budapest to study, offered to lend him money. Liza Monheit acted as interpreter between him and the old Tatar, and drew up a document in Tatar, which she then read to them in both German and Tatar. The loan was to be repaid in Budapest. Other Tatars were also willing to lend him money, but they wanted different arrangements as regards repayment. This one here, however, was very rich, rich enough to send his son, a student of medicine, abroad to continue his studies.

All he had to do now was to learn how to sign his name in Tatar, because they accepted only Tatar signatures. He added "Ben Ibrahim" to his name, to arouse more faith in himself.

His pocket was now filled with Czarist roubles, and he wanted to hurry back to the train immediately, but this he could not do, for he had to have dinner with his benefactors, according to Tatar custom. He could not refuse; after all, he had to show his gratitude in some way.

At last he was in his truck again, wondering whether to say anything about his successful adventure to his comrades at all.

Jóska Body visited him and asked him whether he had made up his mind what he was going to do. Half of the train, load had already scattered, they had decided to follow their noses, some of them even proposed to stay in Ufa.

"What will you do yourself?"

Body answered that he had looked at the map and had found that there was a river near Ufa, called Biela or Bielka. This was a tributary of the Volga, but it flowed into the Volga far above Samara, and there were no battles going on there. Steamboats plied on it. If he had fifty roubles, he could go by this river and avoid the front. He hoped to get home by this route. Perhaps the two of them could get hold of some money and set out together.

He answered Body that he dared not leave the fold. And then, his things might be inspected and confiscated on the

boat. He did not want to part with anything. If Body thought that he could succeed, he would give him the necessary fifty roubles, but he would stay here himself. He would share the fate of the others. He said this only because he wanted to say something, an excuse. The fact was that he dared not go.

Body was surprised. There were dangers to be encountered by sticking together, too, and not only by individuals. And what were the things he did not want to part with?

This he did not know himself. He had a wicker basket full of all sorts of things. But really, what were they, what were the things he did not want to part with, for whose sake he would not undertake the voyage with Body? One could not very well march with a load like that, it could be carried only in a train. What was it, anyway ?

It contained a draughtsboard he had made in the camp, picture post-cards of Lake Baikal and Manchuria, an imitation-ivory paper cutter he had bought in a Chinese bazaar—

The two of them went carefully through his things, to determine what could be left behind. The French dictionary? Or the shorthand notes? Or perhaps the little diary in which he had pasted the most important news and the little illustrations he had stolen out of magazines in the library? The Japanese engravings printed on tissue paper? Or perhaps the bound volume of the *Amur Courier?* Or the list of the most frequently used Chinese words?

The list of the Chinese words and among them: *Wo-hoo-nong-dong*—I have to go south.

Nor could he leave behind the Persian coins, the camp menu cards, the little Japanese fan—

He looked sadly and melancholily at his forty-pound dunghill. No, it could not be done, it was everything he had, and one could not very well leave one's riches so easily behind.

He gave Body the fifty roubles and took leave of him. He could not go, he had to save his few possessions, it was better to be with the rest—

Body tried to persuade him, but when he saw that there

was no use in trying, he embraced him, and the usually impassive and cold Body had tears in his eyes when he took leave of him. He shook his hands for a long time, promised to write to his family, then leapt from the truck and went straight towards the field.

"Where are your things, Jóska?"

Jóska Body waved his little reed cane: that was all he carried. He went straight to the Biela boat.

He waved back several times, and it was some time before Jóska Body's slowly disappearing handkerchief was completely lost to sight. . . .

CHAPTER LXVIII

BY the time the train left Ufa, their numbers were depleted by half. Anybody who wanted to, left, everybody could go wherever he pleased, there were no more orders of the day, everybody ate what he could find. They followed their noses, but they did not know what was ahead of them. There were no other trains running to Samara. No one wanted to get to Samara and this was strange. But more and more trains were coming from that direction and it seemed to them that the passengers in those trains looked at them with pity and sympathy.

At Samara station, the station-master did not salute the train.

In the gathering twilight, the ragged soldiers, who lay all about the station in heaps, looked like gently breathing sacks of potatoes.

The beams of the station were sticking out, the building had no roof.

In the restaurant and in the waiting-rooms sick refugees loitered hopelessly about or gazed at the ceiling in despair.

Children howled and women more dead than alive cried from fatigue.

A mother, tired to death, hearing her child scream, tried to get to her feet, searched about mechanically among her parcels for a few seconds, then dropped prostrate to the

ground and fell asleep.

Near the line, among the sick, the wounded, the refugees, the beggars, and the scrubby Volga boatmen, a few fires burned under kettles.

Doubtful stews were boiling in the battered iron pots, the fires were fed with debris gathered from the streets, where it lay in heaps.

Deserters, ragged streetwalkers, filthy vagabonds, the scum of the city. Red-shirted peasants, princes in disguise, aristocrats running away from the Revolution.

They drank tea, they sang, they dug graves for children with kitchen knives; they played the accordion; they slept, they cried.

They chased away thieves, they invoked death, they kissed and embraced and celebrated nuptials under tattered blankets, they dressed wounds and scratched lice, and the foul smell of human misery hung about them.

At last one who seemed to be a soldier advised the train of returning prisoners to turn back.

A few miles beyond the station, a desperate struggle was in progress for the possession of the bridge across the Volga. It made no difference who won, their lives would not be safe in either case. At best they would have to dig trenches, but it was highly possible that, to save food, they would be mowed down by machine-guns.

They fled backwards, back to Asia, back beyond the pillar of redemption! They did not even look at it when they passed it. Back to Asia, back to the country of the Buriats, the Bashkirs, the Chunguzes, away from bloody Europe. Perhaps Asia would save them for civilization, for their families, for culture!

They stole back to Asia, haunted and hunted, full of fear, of anxiety, of horror. Back, back, farther and farther, as far as possible, far away from the machine-guns of principles, from the bayonet charges of theories, from the barrages of doctrines, back to Siberia!

In a large Siberian town they came to a stop. They were not permitted to go on. They could not go on running away from the world, they were forbidden to carry any farther

their mortal and filthy little lives, the train was taken away from them, they had to get out of it.

They had to get out of it, with the wicker basket, with the list of the most necessary Chinese words, with the proud: *Wo-hoo-nong-dong*, I have to go south—

They were herded into a big prison camp again.

Into a prison camp whose barbed-wire fences offered protection, they entered deeply moved, heaving sighs of relief.

To rest! To rest! To sleep! To sleep! Not to hear the rattle of the train, not to see the station at Samara, not to stare at distant goals! To rest, after these five weeks, to stretch themselves out, and perhaps—perhaps, to wash! To bathe!

Beautiful, pleasant, customary, comfortable, peace-giving prison camp! Protecting fences! With watchful sentries at their posts, with dear wooden barracks, well sunk in the ground, into the earth which surrounded them caressingly, benevolently, soothingly, smoothly. Sunk into immovable, patient, motionless, eternal and indifferent earth. . . .

At dawn next day, they were roused by the rattle of machine-guns.

Shells hissed over their heads and machine-guns barked back at the guns.

Half-mad men, with insanity in their eyes, raced up and down among the barracks, tearing the uniforms off their bodies, begging for mercy, falling to their knees, then dashing on again, throwing away tunics and rifles, collapsing unconsciously. Bloody men and soldiers with cheeks shot through came suddenly into sight, then disappeared again, leaving a trail of blood behind them—

It was the St. Bartholomew's Day of the Red Army.

The Czech legions were permitted by the Soviets to go home, and were sent off to Vladivostok by trainloads. Every day a few trains were sent off so that, by the end of June, by the time the first train arrived in Vladivostok, the last transport was just leaving the Urals. Every battalion of the Czech legions carried a few rifles by permission, to ward off possible attacks by marauders in Siberia. The situation on that day was that, from the Urals to Vladivostok, across the whole of

Siberia, there was a trainload of Czechs at every station, with disciplined and fairly well armed soldiers.

There were hatred and fire in their eyes, and desperate recklessness. Where were they going, anyway? Home?—They, who had been fighting against their own country? To go home, to surrender at discretion, to capitulate, to lick the dust? There was no knowing whether they would be forgiven at all, there was war at home still and there was no hope of mercy.

But there was at least one Czech battalion at every Siberian station—

It was then that General Gajda sent his fatal command screaming along the Siberian telegraph wires.

They would rise that night and seize all the stations of Siberia's only railway line. They would take the command of their destiny into their own hands. The Czarist Admiral Koltchak would organize the army of the White counter-revolutionaries, and, together with him, they would continue to fight in Siberia for the Great Czech State. They would then have a right proudly to refer to their struggles against the Red Menace, and when the Great Bargaining came, they would throw their Siberian sacrifices into the pan of the scale. They had fought in distant Siberia for Europe's culture and civilization! This would be their slogan on the Day of Judgment, before Europe's Areopagus.

That night, the Czech legions rose at every Siberian station and attacked the Red Guard. In one single night they seized control of the Trans-Siberian Railway; the Guard could nowhere resist for more than a day or two.

Some of the guardsmen, former soldiers of the armies of the Central Powers, sought refuge in the prison camps, where their superiors rewarded them, for their short days of glory, with revolver bullets.

Those were the days of retributions, of decimations, of bullets. But after the gore and massacre of the first days, the remaining Red guardsmen were once more locked up behind the barbed-wire fences of prison camps, they had once more become prisoners of war.

The jails of the city were crowded, the dead were buried.

And there was no need for them to be mixed up in the struggles, they could watch everything from afar, indifferently and nonchalantly, as if it meant nothing to them at all!

In this city, the Reds, driven by the Czechs, instinctively retreated to their former abode, the prison camp, and defended themselves from behind its fences. That was why bullets flew in the camp and shells hissed above their heads.

There were some who threw away their uniforms and rifles in time, who then shivered in borrowed rags in some corner until the battle was over and the search for renegades commenced.

Many of them were not recognized, and these ex-Red guardsmen later took up patching shoes again, went back to the cobblers' shops, where they had been when the storm of Revolution had carried them away.

Then there were some who committed suicide, some who fell, some who were thrown into jail, some who were pardoned because they were cooks and because they were ready to cook for the counter-revolutionaries too.

But what was all this compared to the fact that the prisoners of war could once more rest peacefully, that once more safe locks were guarding their peaceful cots, that once more, in the watch towers of the camp, there listened comforting, protecting, selfish bayonets!

Merciless searches were conducted. For hidden revolutionary pamphlets, for escaped revolutionaries, for secret arsenals, for concealed ammunition, for fugitive Red guardsmen among the prisoners.

But the searches came to an end, too, and the retributions also, the battle cries were forgotten, the counter-revolutionary front of Gajda's and Koltchak's armies was permanently established in the Urals, and the victors solemnly informed them that the captive officers might once more sew on their badges, that the captive officers and ranks would once more receive everything due to prisoners of war, that the officers would again receive their pay. And once more they settled down to wait for peace.

The Governor of Siberia, Admiral Koltchak, issued new banknotes, and their monthly pay was given to them in these

notes. They were given a hundred roubles a month, twice as much as under the Romanovs.

But Koltchak's hundred roubles were not enough to buy even bread, and the old Czarist roubles were not trusted either.

And one morning the prisoners of war awoke to find that the seven years of plenty were over, that the pipes which had hitherto poured milk and honey upon them were clogged, that the invisible power who had taken care of them had vanished, that worries for their daily bread had descended upon them.

The thousands and thousands of them in the huge camp suddenly realized their hopeless impotency, their desperate situation.

Something had to be done, the frames of their old principles, the forms of their old ideas, had to be broken.

They were facing starvation.

Their money was worth less and less day after day, and famine was their master. It was no longer a question of petty comforts and pineapple preserves—

CHAPTER LXIX

THE new camp was situated on a knoll near the city of Krasnoyarsk, on the river Yenisei. It was much larger than their old camp had been on the Amur and Ussuri, and there were many thousands of captive officers in it. They also had a *Lavka*, they also had officers' meetings, theatre, and laundry, philharmonic orchestra and welfare committee. Up to now they had lived just as all the prisoners had lived in all the Siberian camps; amidst anticipations, expectations, petty quarrels, nervous arguments, Messiah-waiting, and broken hopes.

But now that cruel want lifted its head, they were beginning to send their souvenirs, their carefully saved preserves and chocolate rations, down to the city. They examined their linen and decided that two shirts were enough for the time being. One shirt, therefore, was superfluous, it could be

sold. Small parties of them were continually going down to the city, carrying the officers' belongings to the junk shops. Agents were hired to watch for an officer pulling out his watch. The moment he did so, they pounced down upon him: "How much do you want for your watch?"

"I won't part with it. This is the one thing I want to keep."

"All right, all right. I don't want you to give it to me right away, but if, which God forbid, you need some money, I'm always willing to buy it. Or, if you want me to, I'll take it down to the city and sell it for you. I get five per cent. on the sale price. Barracks No. 5, the second box to the right. Just ask for Lieutenant Schulteiss—"

More and more parcels, larger and larger parcels were sent down to the city, the go-betweens made more and more money out of their percentage and out of the difference that always existed between the real sale price and the one they confessed to their clients. Yet, in spite of all this, most of them held themselves aloof from becoming agents, although even colonels and generals gave commissions to them and entrusted them with errands. They silently acknowledged the fact that this lieutenant or that captain was professionally engaged in placing goods in the junk shops of Krasnoyarsk, and they soon got accustomed to it.

There were lieutenants who, in the years gone by, had been living under the protection of the command and had therefore been in a position to save. They had saved everything they could lay their hands on, every time there had been a distribution of socks, or clothes, they had managed to get something for themselves. Then there had been light-hearted brigadier-generals, and even one major-general, who had never thought of the future, who had asked only for so much as was needed at the moment. Thus it happened that a prudent lieutenant or a cautious captain was much richer now than the uncalculating brigadier-generals. For in these days of poverty, the wisely saved clothes, tobacco, conserves, nail scissors, shaving soaps, overcoats and Chinese quilts had become things of enormous value.

There had been poor actors, living for applause only, who had preferred their art to material advantages, and there

had been supers, and especially "chorus girls," who had saved the little presents spendthrift Mæcenases had showered upon them. Now these little things assured them not only of a care-free life for several months, but also enabled them to lend to reliable persons—of course, only against security—a few roubles. Naturally, they charged interest too, and they never forgot to remind the borrower that, in case the loan was not repaid in time, the old family seal ring would be lost.

The Tyrolese kettledrummer had slowly wheedled everything out of his poor captain, and now that the captain had become completely impoverished, the kettledrummer left him and indignantly refused to pay heed to the captain's yearning glances. The kettledrummer bought flour in the city and then, going into partnership with a baker's assistant, baked rolls and made an excellent living out of this enterprise. He sold the Chinese quilt and the fine underwear he had received from the captain, took his saved roubles out of the little bag hanging round his neck, and he had the capital for his undertaking.

The agents said that the prisoners were very inefficient. After all, they could bring leather from the city and it wouldn't be so very difficult to make shoes out of it. There certainly were cobblers among the ranks who could teach the officers how to make shoes. They could start on slippers and sandals, it would give them an excellent living. Thousands and thousands of things were needed, and all of them could easily be made by the prisoners. From tin pans to children's toys, everything, everything was in great demand. Nothing could be imported, either from the east or from the west; the various fronts had completely cut off the city. Even buttons could be manufactured.

One evening he heard a timid, modest knock on his door and an awkward, smiling, young man in Russian clothes entered.

The awkward youth told him that he had been an assistant county clerk in Ugocsa and was very much surprised because he could not remember him. Can't you really remember me? I was county clerk in your native town. Einstein said that you were here, that's

why I have come up to see whether you need anything. Don't you really need anything? If you do I am ready to—"

Of course he did. A little money always came in handy. But what's your name? I can't somehow recollect it. Although I do remember you—Your face is very familiar to me—what's your name again?"

"Jampel. Don't you remember Jampel?"

"Of course, Jampel—Good Lord, of course I remember now!—Well, how are you, my dear Jampel?"

"Pretty well, thank God—And if you need a little money—"

Jampel told him that he was now working in timber. His father had been the owner of a timber-yard, that was how he knew something about it. Now the Russians had entrusted him with the management of a yard. That was what he wanted to see him about. He remembered that he had a wood at home—

"A wood? I? You mean, I own a wood?"

"Yes, I know it. I used to be a county clerk in your town. I can even tell you where it is. At the foot of Mount Pálna. That's the place where the wood is. And when I go home I'd like to settle in that town. I think I'm going to get married soon. I am engaged to the daughter of the Krasnoyarsk cantor. And I'd like to build a little house for myself. Of course, only when I got home. I'd like to buy some timber from you. Not much, just enough for a little house. I'll pay for it here and now—Will you do it?"

"Why, I think I will—Why not? But why don't you buy the entire wood?"

"It's too expensive for a poor man like myself. The beautiful oaks there, though—I'd like to have some of them—"

They struck the bargain and Jampel happily paid for the oaks, for the oaks he would cut at the foot of Mount Pálna, the oaks for his little house. . . .

CHAPTER LXX

THERE were no more officers' meetings, and no more orders of the day. Affairs of honour had lost their importance. To

be sure, there were no new so-called affairs of honour in the camp. They had other things to do now than to defend their honour and to demand satisfaction for insults. For all those who neither had reserve funds, nor were able to find acquaintances among the privates, all those who had never saved, who had never occupied a position, who had never been connected with a theatre: in one word, those who had no bread to eat now, were forced to find work of some kind. They could reduce their needs to a certain point only, it was impossible to renounce everything. And the pay was not enough even for dry bread.

It was no longer surprising to hear at night:

"Wake me up to-morrow at six. I've got to go to work—"

The bakery needed men. At one end of the camp, a man was baking earthenware pots, he needed help too. In one of the barracks, some of them started to make sandals, and the example was soon followed by many. Those who had sewed costumes for the theatre, now patched and repaired linen and clothes. And there were some who proudly stated that they had been apprenticed to cobblers, that they would learn the trade in two months.

They discovered that there was a demand for cigarettes. So they bought tobacco and paper and manufactured cigarettes. The tobacco was prepared by the Turkish officers. They transformed the tasteless, raw Siberian leaves into fine mellow Turkish tobacco. The Turkish barracks were the centre of the traffic in tobacco; they manufactured the finest cigarettes.

Small shops were established. The two rows of rooms in each barrack building were partitioned with wood and thus there was an aisle created between the rooms, both on the ground and on the first floor. The officers whose beds were next to the wooden partition had been complaining all these years that they could not sleep because of the constant shuffling of feet in the aisles. They were mostly subalterns, who slept near the partition. Now they suddenly stopped complaining. They cut a little window in the wall and wrote above it that cigarettes, matches, salt, thread, or dried fish were on sale there. Thus the shops came into being. They

attached sliding panels to the openings in the walls, and when a buyer appeared, he knocked on the panel, the shopkeeper pushed the panel aside and handed out the desired article. Commerce was flourishing: there was one shop to every ten prisoners. Wax candles were sold in Barrack No. 5, preserves in No. 6, and in the Turkish barrack Effendi Murad sold *halvah*. There was even a stamp shop.

At one end of the rooms a new world throbbed, but at the other end prisoners were still reading the classics, studying equations. They would not surrender.

Least of all would the German officers. They simply refused to acknowledge that the world had changed. They still wore monocles in their eyes, orderlies still carried after them their canvas-backed chairs, their afternoon tea was served in front of a carefully tended flower-bed that ran along their barrack, and they acknowledged the humble salutes of their allies with a wave of their canes. They still adhered to strict discipline, and no one could understand how they could live like that. True, the Germans had never lived wastefully, they had always been better organized and had always limited their rations to the minimum. But only when they were among themselves. As soon as they were mixed up with the others, the Hungarians and the Austrians, they demanded more than the rest of them. They too borrowed, but they put everything into a common fund, they said they would organize a big factory where only orderlies and privates would work so that they could continue to live like officers.

The Germans' tenacious adherence to their old mode of life even in this misery depressed them greatly. For, among the Hungarians, things had gone from bad to worse, even Lieutenant-Colonel Koncz had become a cobbler, and was very glad when he had enough work. The Germans' very dogs, on the other hand, were still led by orderlies three paces behind their masters. But there was something that evoked unanimous admiration for them. One day, an unexpected search was held in the camp. This time, however, they were not looking for secret pamphlets, or for arms, nor even for conspirators. It was announced that if the presses on which forged banknotes were being printed were not

handed over, or if the forgers would not voluntarily give themselves up, the entire camp would be decimated, the barracks where the presses were hidden would be annihilated and all its inhabitants shot.

No one had ever heard of anything of the kind, and the search was unsuccessful. But in a few days they learned why the search had been held.

The Russians had found some presses operated by German officers in the camp at Kansk. Nor had these officers worked, they also had lived according to their old standards. They lived in a superciliously gentlemanly fashion, far above the sweating industry of their colleagues. And then the Czechs and the Russians discovered that the Germans were forging banknotes.

Everybody was amazed at German industry, German knowledge. How beautifully they imitated Koltchak's notes! They were not forced either to work or to borrow money from privates! And, perhaps, they would not have been shot at all had they behaved less uncompromisingly at their trial. For they demanded to know by what right Koltchak was issuing banknotes in the Czar's country? Or, if they acknowledged the Bolsheviki, by what right did they print banknotes without Moscow's permission?

The presiding judge of the court-martial, so it was said, answered that they printed money by the right of rebellion, but if a rebel was caught he was shot. Consequently, the Germans were also treated as rebels and were promptly shot.

After the execution of the Kansk Germans, the life the local Germans led seemed even more mysterious. This forged-banknote business only enhanced their dignity. And although they lived modestly they continued to exist without work, and they drank their sugarless tea from Japanese cups, sitting at carefully laid tables covered with spotlessly white cloth. The Kansk Germans were pitied and, at the same time, admired for their courage. And when they met Germans they told them they were clever.

Until now it had been the agents who brought news of the world to the camp. Now they wanted a profit even on

this. Several of them hit upon the idea of publishing a newspaper. But the proposition met with lively protests. The idea was dropped, but not because of the protests. It was dropped because the agents found it difficult to transact deals without the help of talk. They had to tell news, they had to talk: perhaps they could get the cigarettes for less, perhaps they could wheedle out a larger commission. They brought news every day. They picked it up from the soldiers passing through the city.

It was they who brought word that, at home, the real fighting had only just begun. That the Russo-Czech armies were fighting successfully against the Bolsheviki, and if they could only break through the Red front in the Urals, the camp would soon go home. But there was no point in going home now, there was still war at home.

So much for internal politics. As for foreign news, all they knew was that America had also joined in the war, but it seemed to them as if they had heard this already. Or had it merely been expected? They could not remember.

Then they heard that poor Almoslino, the postmaster, together with Heedbloom and even with Conger, had been hung by the Reds in Khabarovsk. The Hungarian privates who had joined the Red Guards had discovered that the consuls' warehouses were still full of food and clothes. Enraged, they had arrested them, and had demanded to know why all these things had not been distributed? Why had they let them starve and freeze? For whom had they been collecting all this? Why had they not distributed the relief parcels sent from home? Apparently, they had not given satisfactory answers, neither Heedbloom nor Conger, and since poor Almoslino had happened to be with them, all three had been hung in a railway van. Both Conger and Heedbloom had protested on the ground of extra-territorial rights and international agreements, but the Reds had said: To hell with all that.

Much other news arrived, of firing-squads, of hangings, of executions. The whole world was burning, but the thing that most interested them was the notice-board.

There had been, for years, a notice-board in the middle of the camp. A barometer and a thermometer were attached to it, and there was a clock on it too, but all these were of little importance. Until now, only books for exchange had been advertised on the board, or goods for sale. But now there were other notices on it.

"We need strong men to tan raw hides. Lengyel & Horvát, Barrack No. 16."

"I need box-makers with lathes. Chemist Cipris."

"Aspirant Gervey wants position as man-of-all-work. Undertakes all orderlies' work. Would take on three or, at the most, four employed comrades. Willing to patch clothes and darn stockings."

"Urményi teaches French, German, Swedish. Success guaranteed. Berlitz Method. Grammar taught."

"After lunch, drink your coffee at Sümegi's. Nut and poppy-seed cakes. Always fresh. By general request, Russian melodies sung, with guitar accompaniment."

"Don't throw away dry crusts or any other refuse! We pay high prices for them! United Hog Breeders."

"Who is willing to give a saw and a rasp-file for a six-hundred-page Chinese A B C, Hungarian-Russian dictionary and logarithm table? Report at 9 p.m. in Barrack No. 5, one flight up, Box 23, to the right. Bringer."

"Don't waste your time and energy! Become a dressmaker's apprentice! I teach you how to sew quickly! Small tuition fee. Barrack No. 6, ground floor, Box No. 2. Lengyel."

CHAPTER LXXI

LIEUTENANT REISS one day stopped in front of Aspirant Zsigmond's little machine. It was certainly interesting. For Aspirant Zsigmond — a postmaster at home and Magician Dantsek's most skilful pupil — had discovered that, in this industrial age, the tools soon became blunt. Therefore, he built a machine; a large, circular grindstone was its main feature, and one could push it from shop

to shop and sharpen the blunt tools on the spot. But he could install himself in a quiet corner too, and he often did so, because he was tired of pushing it round, and would have liked to settle down and expand the grinder into a tool-repair shop. Thus did Aspirant Zsigmond, Postmaster of Torda, earn his daily bread.

He was now standing with his machine in an excellent place, beneath a staircase. It was a quiet, sheltered corner, and he could work there undisturbed.

But Lieutenant Reiss was not staring at the little machine. He was curious to find out from whom Aspirant Zsigmond had rented the place. He too would like to lease a place like this, he was interested to know whether one could rent a place like this at all, and if so, for how long a term. He had stopped as if he had merely wanted to have his knife sharpened, but all the time he was asking questions of the grinder. Aspirant Zsigmond was called Uncle Zsiga these days, because that name was more appropriate for a knife-grinder. Uncle Zsiga ran his nail along the edge of the knife, and told Lieutenant Reiss that he had leased the premises from the camp command for ten roubles a month —

Those around them pricked up their ears. What was that, was the camp command still in existence? What did it matter to anybody to whom a little corner under the staircase of Barrack No. 17 was leased?

A few hours later, Lieutenant Reiss leased a garret from the camp command, and two days later, the more reliable inmates of the camp received the following little note: "Madame Jenny will be pleased to see you at tea at five o'clock this afternoon."

Driven by curiosity, they went to see what Madame Jenny wanted of them at five in the afternoon. Madame Jenny was Lieutenant Reiss, and he discreetly informed them that the camp had acquired an extraordinary and most desirable institution. The garret of Barrack No. 17 had been comfortably furnished, and there were two real women there. One could have the women in one's own room, but then, of course, it would be more expensive. Furthermore, the women would go only to such rooms as

were occupied by no more than ten prisoners. One of them was a very charming Buriat woman; she did not speak even Russian well, and her favourite expression was "Rennenkampf," which was the name of a famous Russian general. Ha-ha-ha!

Lieutenant Reiss assured the prisoners that the camp command realized the importance of such a sanitary institution, and that, for the time being, he had been granted a monopoly. Because of the many diseases rampant in the camp, it was not deemed advisable to let this industry spread without limitations. The institution was under constant medical supervision, no one need be afraid.

Lieutenant Reiss soon expanded his establishment, but even then it was always filled. His customers were chiefly recruited from among the entrepreneurs, the capitalists, from among such as managed to borrow from somebody or who had sold a piece of jewellery; the temporary capitalists. Day labourers, mere workers could not afford it. Soon, however, several similar establishments followed Reiss's example, although these dispensed with the services of a physician and paid less rent. These did it secretly, they were proportionately cheaper. But it was not wholly impossible that Reiss had lied about the command's grant of a monopoly, for the secret establishments were not interfered with either.

The workers suddenly gave way to the gratification of their hitherto suppressed passions. Some spent all their money on rum and liqueurs, others bought raisin wine, but the entrepreneurs took great care of their money and spent cautiously. There were many workers who, of a Saturday evening, either spent their entire weekly income on Miss Rennenkampf, or wasted it on drink, or gambled it away. But the entrepreneurs never risked their entire capital. They sipped warily of the entertainments offered, always looking after the interests of their businesses and keeping an eye on expenses. There was the cornet, for instance, who manufactured underwear. He went up to Reiss's, stayed there for two days and two nights, drank and played cards with the girls, then came down with the news that

he was going to enlarge his shop because Lieutenant Reiss's employees were now his customers, and had placed large orders with him.

One day there appeared an advertisement on the notice-board calling for strong workers in unlimited numbers. The entrepreneur, Philip Razzen, needed woodcutters. The advertisement also said that the workers had to bring their own tools, saws or axes. But Lieutenant Razzen was not very particular regarding the axes. He was willing to get them for the workers. The cost would be deducted from their salary. It was likely to be steady work, but it required very strong men. They reported for work in scores, and the foreman never refused anybody. Everybody was needed. Indeed it was such excellent business that Razzen had already several foremen by the third day.

They were cut off both from European Russia and from the East. The city had run out of all supplies and more and more orders arrived in the camp day after day. Because of the war and the various revolutions, help was scarce in the city, and it often happened that Russian tradesmen gave the entire stocking of their shops to the prisoners. There were hog breeders in the camp, and there was an establishment for smoking beef, they manufactured salami and sausages, and made the Russians acquainted with genuine Hungarian paprika bacon.

Both ordinary and fine toilet soaps were manufactured, there was also a book-bindery and a toy factory. There were carpenters, and a cabinet-maker, too, for a professor at the Budapest Royal Academy of Arts and Crafts had now settled down as a furniture maker.

Cipris' Perfumery manufactured not only perfumes and *Eau de Cologne*, but also face powders and toothpaste. Cipris gave his recipe for shoe polish to Aspirant Steiner, who immediately established a factory and turned out thousands of boxes of brown and black shoe polish. There were tanneries too, and the leather goods manufacturers made not only saddle and other horse furniture, but also brief-cases, ladies' hand-bags and footballs.

The prisoners grew rich quickly, and those who had de-

cided to go to work soon enough were already foremen in big plants when their impoverished comrades could not get jobs even as extra help, so overcrowded were the factories.

CHAPTER LXXII

THE *Wadko* had become one of the most powerful organizations in the camp. It stood for: *Waren-Abteilung der Kriegsgefangenen Offiziere*. It was the prisoners' great organization for buying, distributing and marketing products. The little shops in the aisles did not ruin its business; on the contrary, they relieved it from bothering about small purchases. The *Wadko* was a survival from the old days, and in reality, it was maintained by the command. This, however, did not mean that the command used it for its own selfish purposes. On the contrary. The existence of the *Wadko* depended on the sympathy and co-operation of the prisoners. The prisoners were customers now, and they had to be satisfied, they had to be flattered. They had to be lured to the *Wadko;* consequently, it was in the financial interests of the command to gain the confidence of the prisoners and to have their support for the *Wadko*.

The *Wadko* offered honest competition to the underground shops, the dishonest organizations. It carried only first class articles and introduced a system of credit, which meant in the camp that one could pay in a certain sum and as long as there was a balance left, one could purchase anything one pleased. Thus the *Wadko* was always in a position to buy at reduced rates, because it always had considerable sums at its disposal.

The *Wadko's* cheques were accepted as real currency, they were accepted in the city too, even the Russians respected them.

For there was a shortage in currencies. Therefore, some of the organizations issued notes of their own. These were accepted as legal tender in the camp, and once a prisoner wanted to play a joke on a city merchant and paid him with one of these notes. The Russian accepted it, gave goods in

exchange for it; he even gave back the change in real money.

A smart fellow established a pawnshop. But it dealt only for a few weeks in clothes and jewellery. One Saturday, one of the manufacturers had no money to pay his employees. He went over to the pawnshop, took his finished goods with him and struck a bargain with the pawnbroker. From that moment on, the camp's first pawnshop dropped its original policy and settled down to industrial banking. Operators in a tight hole, and those who could not readily sell their wares, took their articles to the pawnshop by cart-loads. The broker organized a big warehouse and worked only in a large way of business. But soon dozens of money-lenders and scores of small pawnshops were established to satisfy the demand for them.

The value of the money was constantly sinking. A Produce and Exchange Bank was therefore established in Barrack No. 17. Those who deposited their capital in the bank could protect themselves against the fluctuation of the Russian currency. The Produce and Exchange Bank bought immediately real currency: yen, dollar, pound sterling, or gold. All loans and interest were paid and had to be repaid in yen, dollar, pound sterling or gold. The bank's cheques and certificates soon commanded a premium in the city. The Russians considered the certificates of the Produce and Exchange Bank as the most reliable investment they could make, and for a certificate worth one thousand roubles they paid two and even three thousand Koltchak or Czarist roubles.

In the shadow of the great industrialists, big capitalists, and big operators, there appeared little individual businesses also. A captain sold nut candy, which he made himself at night: on Sunday morning, on the promenade, lieutenants sold lemonade, cigarettes, matches, pencils and notebooks, and, at night, pastry makers went from room to room offering their wares. Some of them carried trays which were suspended from their necks, and they offered, with persuasive smiles, bootlaces, boot polish, soap, buttons, or they let you know in whispers that the game in the *Casino Iritz* would start to-night at six o'clock—

This last they had to whisper, but for a short while only. Soon the gambling-houses operated quite openly. They had no need to hide, no one persecuted them. There was a day when three new roulette dens were opened at once. All they had to do was to lease a room from an impoverished prisoner-family. They put a large table in the middle of the room, and although there were no roulette wheels, one could lose or win just as easily with numbers pulled out of a bag. While the game was going on in the room, the original inhabitants withdrew to the walls and sat round silently, as if they had not been in their own homes at all. Of course, they got a share of the profits of the house, but most of the time they were paid only a flat sum for the rent, and for the hospitality.

On Saturday evenings, when the workers were paid, the shops were suddenly flooded, the casinos and restaurants crowded, the workers bombarded the pastry vendors, emptied all the little trays hanging from the necks, they bought up all the cakes, they bought up everything.

Mr. Reiss's various establishments swarmed with patrons, and all the rooms with agents and procurers. These latter distributed handbills informing the prisoners that another charming little nest had just been opened, a very pleasant little nest, and not at all expensive.

The theatre also re-opened and huge posters advertised "The Count of Luxembourg," but, of course, by Saturday and Sunday, when the performances were scheduled to take place, tickets were already commanding premiums. The ticket speculators waited all the week for this opportunity and they made a handsome profit, provided any one was so foolish as to wait until Saturday to buy his ticket.

Barrack No. 18 underwent extensive alterations and opened again as the first cabaret. For the time being, they played Schnitzler on the stage, but one could eat and drink during the performance. Patrons who did not drink were neglected, but those who ran up big bills were entertained by the ingénue who, here, was in fact a good-looking youth, because girls were still not permitted to parade

openly. Indeed, even if they had been, where would they have found any to play in Hungarian and German plays? Hence, the male ingénue, who, since he played in a cabaret, had to drink with the patrons. He had to drink, to entertain them, to help run up their bills. And in order to make the sausage manufacturer feel absolutely at home, *chambres séparées* were established in Barrack No. 18, booths nicely curtained, and when Lieutenant Köves' gypsy band went in at the invitation of the wealthy patron, the head-waiter discreetly pulled together the curtains.

In front of the cabaret, crowds of poor prisoners gathered, poor men who had not even enough money for a demi-tasse, and hence could not enjoy even for a fleeting quarter of an hour the crumbs of pleasures their rich comrades so greedily gobbled up. The head-waiter was constantly swearing at the cornet and aspirant waiters for not keeping an eye on the dodgers who tried to leave without paying their bills, especially that Turkish *bimbashi*, who yesterday again succeeded in getting away with two cheese cakes, one demi-tasse and three liqueurs.

With tattered pieces of underwear under their arms, broken, haggard, miserable officers visited the junk shops at the end of the camp. They tried to sell their shirts. After long bargaining and begging they were given for them a quarter of a pound of sausage made of horse-meat, or, perhaps a small loaf of bread. It was difficult to explain to them that their linen was of no value whatever to anybody except themselves, it could not be sold as anything but dishwashing rags or machinery wipers—

On the first severe winter morning, a shocking incident stirred the labourers hurrying to work. A sleigh dashed in through the gate and went straight to Barrack No. 5. There it stopped. The sleigh was laden with straw, but this alone would not have aroused any suspicion. In a moment or two, however, a body wrapped in sacks was carried out of the barrack and put on the sleigh. The man wrapped in the sacks was unconscious and one could not see his face. But it was obvious that he was a human being. As he was carried to the sleigh drops of blood fell on the snow through the sacks.

The sleigh raced away with the man, accompanied by a medical student.

Shuddering and whispering, they passed the name of a certain lieutenant all round the camp. He had been out of work for weeks and had repeatedly appealed to the command for aid. The last time he had asked for help, he was refused. He was unable to borrow anything, and since he had already sold all his belongings, he loitered about the camp in ragged clothes, completely destitute. He had met another jobless lost sheep, a demoralized and worthless Turkish aspirant, and together they had decided to rob the Devecseri Leather Goods Warehouse, in the garret of the Turkish barrack.

They had committed the robbery at dawn that day, unaware that the warehouse was guarded. The guard dared not openly resist the two robbers, he managed to get round behind them and, in the darkness, hit at the lieutenant's arm with his axe—

It was this lieutenant who was now taken to the hospital in sacks—He was covered so that his comrades should not recognize him.

It was obvious that something had to be done about this, to prevent the recurrence of such a thing. Therefore, the Camp Constabulary was organized that very day. If the would-be criminals knew that there was a Constabulary they would not attempt such outrages.

Now that the Police had been established, several prisoners spoke of adventures which had lately befallen them. An aspirant from Barrack No. 6 had been robbed of his weekly salary in the dark aisles; a captain, as he went out for water, had been attacked by two unknown thieves who pulled off his overcoat; an agent had been robbed of his gold watch and of his silver-fox fur cap with the foot-long earlaps. From an aspirant, apprenticed to a cobbler, a pair of boots had been stolen; he was delivering them when they were torn out of his hands. It wasn't even dark, yet he could not see who took them.

Until now, no one dared speak about these things. Men considered them so incredible. They simply could not imag-

ine how they could have happened. Now nobody talked of anything else. Until now men had suffered their losses in silence rather than mention them, but now they realized they had been mistaken, because the police immediately created order. Guards were placed before the warehouses, street traffic was prohibited after a certain hour, and whoever walked abroad at night, did so at his own risk. There were also patrols round the *cafés*, the cabarets and the theatre.

Thereafter only petty thefts occurred, but such things, of course, happened even in the most civilized and most orderly states.

The police were a success, the robbers and bandits disappeared, they must have mended their ways because there were no further complaints.

The police soon enlarged their activities. They began to control the cabarets and the underground taverns, they came down on the card-sharpers, they decided to stamp out immoral practices. The camp was not surprised at all by all these increasing activities.

At first the camp disapproved of and was against the measures taken by the newly created department of the police; the *cafés* especially tried to stir up popular feeling against it, but a mistake the police committed one morning made them very popular. For early one morning they arrested little Aspirant Kilenyi for kissing Lieutenant Ruttkai behind one of the barracks.

When taken before the command they proved, however, that they had been drinking in the cabaret all night long, that they had got drunk and, since nowhere in the world, not even at home, was it criminal for two drunken men to kiss each other after a night of drinking, they requested to be discharged.

The command was annoyed because of the blunder the police had committed, and immediately discharged the two of them. They went all over the camp and indignantly related the outrage committed against their personal liberty. It was curious, nevertheless it was true, that it was just this blunder which made the policemen detailed to the new De-

partment of Public Morals popular and, from that moment the camp was not so much annoyed as amused by the members of this worthy institution.

Of course, there were many who charged the police with misconduct. They said that, for a few roubles, its members shut their eyes to malpractices that went on in the cabarets, that they did not report the gambling-dens if only the bribes were sufficiently tempting, that, for a few roubles, they let a great many things go on unnoticed, and were especially indifferent as to the regulations concerning public morals.

But all these were merely false charges. Naturally they did accept a few roubles, they did receive here and there, especially from the gambling-houses, regular bribes, but since the law was very hazy, it was mostly up to the individual policeman to divine what was or was not a crime. There was no written law; they went, on the whole, by the laws at home, but, of course, by only as many as they could remember, and no one could be possibly forced to remember more than he wanted to.

Sometimes the police were accused of forgetting, for good money, all the regulations.

And if a few burglaries had occurred lately, it was because the police could not very well attend to everything. It was simply overwhelmed with work. To counterbalance this, the larger workshops and firms organized a police of their own, a private police, to guard the stores and warehouses.

The theatre revived "The Divorcée." The house was crowded and the performance superb. Lieutenant Magda, the prima donna, sang the rôle beautifully, and Gaby Tóth the soubrette, danced ravishingly with Ernö Gábor, who was a well-known actor at home. Some of them remarked that the soubrette's voice was getting a little too husky, but his ankles were still the same. Laci Dobos was simply overwhelming in the leading male rôle, he made a brilliant *bon vivant*. He would certainly get a good contract at home. In the last act, there was a special song. When this was sung —it was said to be a Siberian addition to the operetta—the entire audience wept.

Without, ten thousand mad guns roar and boom,
Within, soft strains are heard, sweet flowers bloom;
Ah, soon again I'll see my child, my wife,
When Peace at last shall end all blood and strife. . . .

Mr. Ortmann, proprietor of the salami factory, wept; the entire directorate of the sandal-works wept; the battle-scarred veterans in the boxes wept; the president of the Court of Appeal wept, the director of the *Wadko* wept; the foreman of the guts-cleaners wept. In the middle rows the alcohol smugglers cried; a little farther back, the *Nemalah's* plumbers and mirror-builders and the croupier from the *Casino Iritz;* still farther back, the off waiters from the *Theatrical Buffet,* and right at the back in the last rows, the boot-lace sellers, the dishwashers, the peddlers, the cigarette-fillers, the fifty-five-year-old cobbler apprentices, the wood-cutters, Uncle Gyula, the sixty-year-old captain in the Reserve, who could no longer work, and lived by selling an infallible system to win at cards. The entire Officers' Corps cried, the most hard-bitten capitalists and the most inhuman profiteers were shedding bitter tears—

Even on their way home, they were still under the influence of the performance. It was late, and on the way from the theatre to the barracks, policemen shivered in the frost-bitten Siberian night. Near the fence, where the potato-bed had been in the summer, a thin cloud of smoke rose from the snow. It looked very suspicious, and a few of them called a policeman and went over to see what it was.

As they approached the fence, they saw that there was a dugout underneath the snow, the smoke came from there. They were about to turn back. Perhaps it was only a small workshop, or a new *café.* But the policeman said that he knew of none in that neighbourhood.

It was a wretched dugout. Its door was covered with straw to keep out the cold. One couldn't open it, but after repeated yells and shouts an old, bearded man, wrapped in a Chinese quilt, came out. Even after he opened his mouth, it required a considerable degree of imagination to recognize in him Lieutenant Korzer. He was angry at having been disturbed, but, since they had discovered him already,

he was willing to tell them that he had built the dugout himself, because he did not want to go among men any more. If a dugout had been good enough for them at the front, it was good enough now, too. He would rather live there than return to society, which he had learned to hate and despise.

There were rags and splinters of wood in the cave. The rags were Uncle Korzer's clothes, and the splinters served as fuel. He must have stolen them from the fence. There was an old pot in the den, half filled with water; his mess-tin, containing some morsels of food, was on a primitive fireplace near the wall; on the floor, covered with some straw, there were two planks that formed Uncle Korzer's bed. One could not stand up in the dugout to which Uncle Korzer had withdrawn to live like a cave-man.

The policeman wanted to take Lieutenant Korzer before the command. But the nocturnal visitors, still under the influence of the song in the last act of "The Divorcée," would not let him.

They asked Uncle Korzer why he had given up worldly pleasures and the society of human beings.

Then Uncle Korzer collapsed on to the two planks and burst into tears. He said he could not bear it any longer, he had retired to the den to die. At home, he had been an accountant, but he could not do any manual work. Not because he was unable to, he was in good physical condition, and he was only forty-three years old; but he could not bear it mentally.

He considered manual labour humiliating and he considered himself humiliated whenever he did any kind of active work. He had often attempted it, but he always had to give it up. He knew he would perish there. His clothes were in rags. The hundred roubles were barely enough for bread, and for the past two weeks, ever since he had retired to his cave, he had been living on bread only. During the day he never left his dugout, except when going for his pay. He left the cave only at night, and then only to fetch water. He would never be able to do any physical work, but he would consider any kind of mental work as salvation. He wanted to do something. But if ever again he had to work a

lathe or cut tin plates with scissors, he would die—

All of them had gone through this. During the first days, they had felt humiliated whenever they picked up a hammer. It was in their blood. And even in this misery, they could not completely get rid of it. There were many willing to do even the heaviest of labour if only it was done somewhere where no one could see them. No matter how badly it paid, a bakery always had enough help. But if some one advertised for loading goods in full view of the barracks, in full view of the others, there were no applicants, no matter how high the pay offered. A business man took pity on Uncle Korzer; a big business man, who had a costly iron lathe, twenty employees and who sent considerable sums home through the Czech legionaries' mail. He told Korzer to report for work the next morning. He could keep the books; a large works like his needed a bookkeeper.

Uncle Korzer was overwhelmed with joy. Immediately he rose and left the dugout. He did not want to go back to the barracks that evening though, because he was too lousy. He decided to sleep in a barrack for the ranks. Then, the next morning, he would go down to the bath, disinfect and delouse himself, and report for work.

The business man was roundly cheered by the grateful group of prisoners, and soon the news of his charitable heart spread in the camp. Everybody was glad that Uncle Korzer's life was saved. They made way for him, and the business man, in his expensive fur coat, with a fat cigar in his mouth, set off home with a friendly wave of his hand.

He must go home for, so he said, his orderly was waiting for him with supper, and he did not want to have him staying up all night long.

The big business man had a private kitchen and a private orderly. He did not eat the ordinary rations, his stomach was out of order. He walked in a dignified manner towards his private kitchen, his private orderly, his private supper and, with the consciousness of a good deed well done on his radiant face, he hummed in the Siberian night:

Without, ten thousand mad guns roar and boom,
Within, soft strains are heard, sweet flowers bloom.

They scattered, they all went home; but he could not forget Uncle Korzer's bent figure as he carried his lousy little bag towards the barracks for the ranks.

He reached his room. The lamp was burning, although his room-mates were not home. He knew that all of them were out working overtime. Richard was out, he had to help at the dressmakers', they had to finish a trousseau in a hurry. It was said that the trousseau was intended as a surprise, an axle-grease manufacturer had ordered it as a present for the daughter of a Russian military commander.

Little Sluka was also out. He had been taken away in the afternoon by the Czechs, because he hailed from Rózsahegy, and since the Czechs claimed that that city would belong to the future Czech State, he was put on the active list. Steve Rácz was out substituting for a croupier in some gambling-house, and the others were also out.

Who, then, was in the room? He opened the door cautiously. He had a guest. Little Tánczos.

Little Tánczos first begged his pardon for disturbing him at such a late hour. Then he told him that he was in a terrible predicament. He begged him to take with him some letters and give them to his parents and sisters. For he would never again see the Chain Bridge, the Hill of Roses, St. Margit's Island, the Eastern Terminus—

He was pale and trembling with fever, little Tánczos who had joined the Army voluntarily at seventeen and had fought bravely. He had not been eighteen when the Russians had taken him prisoner, wounded. He was a steady, brave boy. He always worked hard. He was like a young bear: a little awkward, but strong. He was a charming lad. His heart was soft as butter, and now he threw himself on the bed, crying bitterly:

"I'll have to die—I've got no revolver, so I'll have to hang myself—Couldn't you get a revolver for me? It would be better than—"

"Have you gone mad? What's the matter?"

The boy told him of his tragedy. He was the most reliable among his box-mates, so he was entrusted with the care of their hard-earned roubles. One Saturday evening, on his

way home from work, he was lured into a gambling-house. At first he lost his own money only. Then some one who knew Uncle Gyula's system, sold him the secret at a reduced rate. Following the infallible system he lost all of his room-mates' money, all the laboriously saved roubles.

For a few weeks he kept the matter a secret. He took on extra work, worked day and night, hardly sleeping at all. He couldn't have slept, anyway, because his conscience was torturing him. He sold everything he had, so that, when one of his friends asked him for money, he could give him some. To-night, however, it was the end. He had lied, saying that he had taken it to the bank, not wanting to carry so much money on his person. Now he would have to die before to-morrow morning, before the bank opened.

It was barely a thousand roubles for which little Tánczos wanted to die, a voluntary soldier—a voluntary death.

He calmed him down. He gave him a slip of paper, a receipt for the missing amount. He told him to go home and not to worry, he would get the money by the morning. He warned him not to do anything rash before he saw him again. He would get him a loan, to be paid back after the return.

"By morning? By morning?"

"Yes, by morning. And now go home. No, don't go. Wait for me here. If your room-mates are looking for you, show them the receipt and tell them you are waiting for me. Tell them I have gone out to fetch the money."

He commanded little Tánczos to sit quietly and not dare do anything. It would all blow over.

He went out in the buran-ridden night and pulled the proprietor of the gambling-house, where the boy had lost his money, out of his bed.

It was an easy matter, because the gamblers' consciences were never quite clear. They never knew what surprise would overtake them. Czech soldiers were wont to drop in on the gambling-houses, and every time they came, the proprietors shivered like leaves at the thought of what would happen if a Czech should lose.

The gambler came readily and asked him what he wanted.

He told him what it was all about. It would end in a scan-

dal! He demanded the money back at once—

The gambler whined. He said he did not even know the young man. Was he sure that he had played in his casino? The whole thing was nothing but a scheme of his competitors, because lately he had been successful. The boy must have played in the Turkish barrack, in the roulette room. Why, in his place they wouldn't even sell chips to such a boy! It would be best to go over to the Turkish barrack. Oh, perhaps, all the owners of gambling-houses could get together and raise the missing sum. That would be best—

He was adamant. He said he must have it at once. The full amount and at once. Otherwise, there would be a scandal. He would go and seek redress. He would go to the command, or even to the Czechs, and he would go at once—

The gambler now accused him of trying to blackmail him.

He seized the gambler by the neck.

He was going to take him to the command at once.

It was a damned shame!

If any one was willing to gamble, willing to win, he should be willing to lose too! No casino in the world pays back the lost amount under such circumstances—

He began to yell and to shout.

This was the most efficient way to deal with him. The gambler begged him not to speak so loudly. Only, no scandal! The whole camp might be aroused. Then he took out his money-bag and counted out the sum in hundred-rouble notes. He shot a painful glance at him after every note. Wasn't it enough yet?

But when the money was paid out, the gambler shook hands with him and told him that he was very grateful for the intervention. A good thing that it did not end in a scandal. God forbid! You see, such things can easily be arranged between gentlemen. Of course, not everybody would do it. The others have no idea of ethics and honour.

He took the money to Tánczos. The boy heaved a sigh of relief.

He asked the boy never to gamble again. The boy promised. One could see in his eyes that he was going to keep his promise.

By the time he went to bed it was morning. The aisles were already stirring. Here and there, early customers knocked on the little windows and asked for ten cigarettes. A servant was carrying water. He could hear the splashing of the water. Before he fell asleep, he heard a comrade going to work humming sadly:

Without, ten thousand mad guns roar and boom,
Within, soft strains are heard, sweet flowers bloom.

CHAPTER LXXIII

WHAT was it that enabled gaunt, sharp-eyed Lieutenant Dima to continue, ragged and starving, his series of lectures on "Oriental Gods"? What caused Hans Kohn to paint the future of Palestine in such brilliant colours in Barrack No. 19? What caused Gyurka Szász, a bespectacled aspirant, to tackle the English language after he had learned French?

There were only a few such ascetics left. Need and want swept the men away from their books, away to the bench, the three-legged cobblers' stools, the gut-scraping knives, the lathes, the plumbing shops, the powder mills, the smuggling. Only here and there could one perceive, among the sweating and hard-labouring men, a Dima, a Hans Kohn, or a Gyurka Szász.

The Prague university professor had also sunk low. He was a professor of history at home too, and not only here. Many of them had become university professors in Siberia. The command had appointed them a year or so before. For there had come instructions from home that courses for university students should be established. Law, philosophy, and all sorts of other courses.

The lecturers had been selected from among those who had degrees in these particular subjects. The instructions, so they had said, had informed the students that diplomas received for courses taken in the camp would be accepted at home.

He remembered his old camp, where the command had appointed him to lecture on economics. He had been a uni-

versity professor in Siberia for three months.

Those were the glorious days of culture! Every day he mounted the rostrum to lecture to his pupils.

But he spoke to his pupils alone for only two days. After his second lecture, Captain Würth visited him in his box and asked him whether it was true that his course would include Socialism too, He confessed that his course included all the scientific theories concerning economics, and therefore Socialism.

The next day, half the camp came to his class, the lecture room was not large enough to hold them; they went over to the theatre, even that was crowded. He had to hold parallel courses, and yet they shouted at the end of every lecture: "Continue, continue!" At the end of class, he was applauded just like the more popular professors at the Budapest University. The real pupils had no room to take notes, there was no chance of questioning. After a while, the real students did not come to class any longer, they were crowded out by the dilettantes, and they were satisfied if he merely testified that they had regularly attended class—

The glorious days of culture and science were gone, there was no university here. There was want here, and those who had money were lost in worldly pleasures. No one was interested in Saint-Simon or in Robert Owen's co-operative society, in Fichte's *Geschlossener Handelstaat*, in Marx and Lassalle.

He was no longer annoyed by Captain Würth's naive questions, was no longer irritated by the scholar Jaczkovics' stare and the disdainful smile with which he used to follow his lectures from the end of the third row—

Captain Würth was now carrying water for a private kitchen and Jaczkovics, the scholar, bowed deeply every time a customer entered his book-bindery. The Prague professor, on the other hand, the only real university professor among them, who denied that he was a professor and denied that he was from Prague, was still very busy. He had regular hours in his box, from three to six in the afternoon, his boxmates let him do it for a small fee. He was at home from three to six to the tattered wretches as well as to the pro-

fiteers. He sat, with a tall, pointed, fantastic, blue hat on his head, in a black tent from whose ceiling hung mysterious crescents and balls. Here sat the Prague university professor from three to six, and read futures—

The ranks no longer lent money to the officers. Even those who had been in jobs were distressed now. Competition was keen, the officers were ready to accept and did accept jobs as cabdrivers even, or if the Czech command would let them, as farm-hands in the villages. The more affluent of the ranks said that they had enough money out, they would be happy if they could get it all back. They no longer trusted those who were willing to borrow, and, anyway, they thought that their money was in a better place when invested. The speculators and entrepreneurs not only made the entire camp their employees, but even drained the channels from which possible loans might flow. They laid their hands on every rouble that was not employed. If any one had a little more money, he was taken in as a partner, was given a share of the profits. They promised interest, to be paid not at home but here, in Siberia. Men with money wouldn't even talk to a poor prisoner. Loans to be repaid at home had become mere fairy tales, no one dared mention them any more. He would have been laughed at.

CHAPTER LXXIV

THE prisoners used to call the camp *gorodok*. This Russian word means "small town." Indeed it had been a garrison town in the Czar's day. Russian regiments had lived in the barracks before the prisoners. One part of it was still inhabited by troops, by Admiral Koltchak's soldiers and Czech Legionaries. But most of it was used by the prisoners. The officers lived in brick buildings, the ranks in barracks dug in the earth and covered by wooden roofs. Lately, a few eccentric officers had gone to live with the ranks. Some of them wanted to learn a trade and, since their teachers were living there, they moved down too. Then there were some who took an oath of asceticism and, indeed, they had

plenty of opportunities to practise virtue and self-denial in the ranks' barracks. There was Lieutenant Barth, for instance, who professed to be a disciple of the Encyclopedists, but who spread the theories of the philosophers of the French Revolution with variations of his own.

Thus, for instance, he said that, according to Diderot, every man was born to sin. He maintained the same position, but he qualified it with the statement that while one man is impoverished by his sins, another may be enriched by them. Lieutenant Barth preached purification, he exhorted his comrades to purge themselves of impoverishing sin as well as of enriching sin. He was indefinite, however, on the question of exactly how to do so.

Dr. Forgács also lived down there; he was a lawyer who had been mixed up with the Reds in '18. He had later been sentenced to death, and was now temporarily at liberty. But if the Red Revolution should again break out in Siberia, his sentence would be executed. He could not escape, for, if caught, he would be shot. And if there were another Bolshevik revolution, he would be shot, too.

There was a rumour in the camp that those who maintained relations with him were watched and, therefore, not one of the officers spoke to him, their brother-officer. The ranks, of course, were different. They treated him with great respect, and although they lived like sardines they managed to make room for a table where he could work. Forgács called his box, Death House. He used to say that every day he lived was a gift, because there was no chance for him to escape, and he considered it impossible that there should not be another revolution in Siberia.

He once went to visit Forgács, who received him rather coldly. He told him that he should spend as little time with him as possible, because the story about his being watched was not wholly unfounded. Said Dr. Forgács: "One shouldn't be a sentimentalist when one's life is at stake. The ranks, of course—well, that's a different question—"

He gently fondled the ranks with his glance, the ranks who gave him of what they had the least: room. The ranks lived in the semi-subterranean barracks so closely packed

that when they lay down, with their little boxes under their heads, on two rows of bunks, they were touching each other. A night down there was agony: stinking human bodies, foul smells, coughing, snoring, the smoke of bad tobacco. You could not move, you could not stretch out your arms, you could not get off the shelf any other way than by creeping cautiously forward between two neighbours. You could only lie rigidly, and if there was a filthy man next to you you were bound to get filthy, and if he was full of vermin you were bound to get infested with vermin, and if he was lousy you inevitably got lousy too. From day to day, from week to week, from month to month, from year to year. How long yet—

But they managed to pack themselves in even closer, and, next to the stove, before the window, near the door, they made room for the officer sentenced to death.

They gave him room where all the bitterness and all the sufferings of a lifetime were condensed into every minute of every hour, where they waited for years for one to die who lived near the door, for one to drop off who slept on the lower shelf, for one to fall dead whose place was near the window. What could the man who sat in a good warm *café*, near the window, and protected by a bronze screen, know of this? What did he know of what it meant to live at the other end of the room from the stove, in fifty-five degrees of cold below zero, to live in the upper bunk with rheumatic legs that would not carry one up there, to live far away from the window whence light came? What did he, who had never yet been nearly choked to death by the agonizing air of a Siberian barrack for the ranks, know of this?

It is incredible how few words there are in the dictionaries, how poor one's vocabulary is when it comes to describing the swollen feet, the lost teeth, the stinking rags, the wound-eaten bodies, the vermin, the hopelessness. All one can do is to acknowledge defeat, for there are no words. It is useless to attempt to do it unless one can stuff a little of this smell into Humanity's nostrils, unless one can hurl a piece of these rags into Humanity's face, unless one can

hold high one of these swollen legs, unless one can exhibit these diseased eyes, unless one can make every human being in the world feel the pains of a prisoner of war whose misfortune it was to be among the ranks.

The chorus of disabled soldiers at noon howled because what they were given as soup was merely hot water with three ears of oats swimming in it. A comrade contractor had taken over the feeding of the ranks, and it was evidently a paying business.

Privates whom Siberian farmers had kicked out for the winter to save bread, privates whose feet had been burned off by molten iron in factories, privates whose legs or hands had been frozen off cutting Siberian forests, privates whose hair had fallen out from sorrow, whose bodies had rotted away with typhus, whose lungs were perforated by the Siberian wind, who had picked up scurvy on the Murman coast, whose teeth had fallen out, whose gums had blackened, these privates had come to the camp to live in these barracks. They had come to wait for death. And in this respect they did not differ from Dr. Forgács, who had also gone to live there while he waited for death.

But among the privates, there was exactly the same ladder, from beggars up to Salami Manufacturer Ortmann, as among the officers: from the millionaire Aspirant Hanák down to Lieutenant-Colonel Koncz, the cobbler's help—

The war-profiteer private had long since forgotten the barrack, from which he had started. Mr. Ortmann who, some time ago, had dashed out like a madman when soup had arrived to get a ladleful with some fat in it, now paraded in a Siberian silver-fox cap, and at the New Year's Eve orgy in the *Theatrical Buffet*, was host to the entire personnel of the theatre. French champagne flowed in streams, and both the philharmonic orchestra and Lieutenant Köves's gypsy band played for him. All the tattered inmates of the barrack whence he hailed could have eaten fresh white bread for five years on the money he spent on that one night. People used to say: "He makes good money, he can do with his money what he pleases—" Mr. Hercz, the jeweller, had discovered a new industry. And the

prosperous, well-to-do officers at last knew how to save their riches. For some weeks past, Mr. Hercz had been manufacturing, in very great secret, shoe-soles and shoe-heels of gold. The thriving officers covered these soles and heels with leather and thus they intended to take home their honest, well-earned pennies.

But Dr. Forgács was unwilling to talk about these things.

"And are you so certain that you will be executed?"

"Well, why shouldn't they execute me? Look at it from their point of view. Suppose that I am not the old Red Forgács, but a major-general at home. Don't you think that I should execute the rebels I captured? Suppose that I am a White commander in Koltchak's army. Shouldn't I shoot the rebels? Suppose I am commanding a free Red unit somewhere in Siberia. Shouldn't I kill every one of our enemies? Resign yourself to the thought, that's how it has to be. But it doesn't interest me—It is incredible that you won't realize that history is being made all round us. Tell me, when has a revolution ever been merciful? Tell me, when has a counter-revolution ever been merciful? And what is this barrack, if not an execution ground? What are the Murman railway, the scurvy, the starvation, the three logs of wood a day? Aren't these death too? You had better go back and not bother either me or yourself—"

Dejected, he left Dr. Forgács, who, so he thought, was exaggerating a bit. He was on his way back to his barrack, but first he went over to the *Nemalah*. He thought he might as well take on a job, his money was dwindling, he had to earn a few roubles. But his old job in the *Nemalah*, smearing amalgam on glass plates for mirrors, which he had light-heartedly thrown up, was already taken. They offered him a job in the plumbing shop. They gave him a big piece of tin plate and a pair of shears and told him to cut a figure out of the plate. He did it well, they took him on at once. He was to cut circles out of tin plates with shears, six hours a day. Hard work, but well paid. He took the job.

Until now he had always been able to get along, he hadn't had to work. Only once had he been forced to make mirrors for a few weeks, but he didn't like this circle-cutting

business at all. But he was ashamed to borrow from his brother-officers. Although they asked him for a receipt, they all acted as if they had given him alms. They smiled when he said: "I'll pay it back to you at home." They smiled and said, with a supercilious wave of the hand:

"That's all right, that's all right—"

Nor were there any more loans from the ranks. Nothing remained but the plumbing shop. Sad. To cut tin circles in a draughty shop, to cut until one's arms and legs got rheumatic, well—He would be invalided for a few weeks, too, he was sure he would cut his fingers—There wasn't much solidarity among men—

For the last time he stretched on his cot, a free man. Then the bespectacled Gyurka Szász came into his room. He was a silent, gentle-mannered youth, this Gyurka Szász, he was always studying.

"What is it, Gyurka?"

"If you don't mind—I noticed that you didn't eat all of your bread yesterday—I noticed that you have left some of it for some days now—But only—of course—only if you really don't need it —"

"Of course, my boy—I don't need it—Take whatever there is on the shelf —"

"All of it? All there is on the shelf?"

"Certainly. I only eat bread from the bakeries. I'll give you some of that, too—And I'll try to borrow some money for you —"

"I'll be very grateful to you—"

"Tell me, Gyurka, what do you do at home? I mean what's your father at home—What's his business?"

Gyurka Szász's eyes suddenly filled with tears. He answered in a very low tone:

"President of the Chamber of Deputies—Or is it of the House of Lords?—I really don't know for certain—"

He leapt to his feet. He looked at the frail, serious, refined Gyurka Szász. At the boy who was always studying. And who begged for a piece of bread now. A piece of bread that would have become mouldy anyway—

"What do you mean—Chamber of Deputies—or House

of Lords—"

"Karoly Szász—My father is Karoly Szász—President—"

Gyurka turned away and looked out of the window. He looked towards the infinite, heart-breaking, snow-covered Siberian steppe. Tears were slowly dripping from his eyes.

He laid his hand on the boy's shoulder, wanted to say something, something consoling. Then he sighed in silence:

"You know—there isn't much *solidarity* among men—"

"Yes? Did you say something?"

"I only said I'd try it—I think I'll be able to borrow some money for you—"

"It would be very—very good—"

CHAPTER LXXV

HE worked, as a plumber, for six weeks, in the *Nemalah's* shop. He worked in a very underheated room. At first, he was merely drawing circles on the plates, with an iron-pointed compass. Then he was entrusted with cutting out the circles, too. Soon he was promoted again. The tin plates had to be turned up along the edges and hammered into the shape of mess-tins. He worked in a heavy overcoat, fur cap and a pair of trousers made out of Chinese quilts, but his left hand was constantly frozen. Occasionally he hit his fingers with the hammer, and then his hand began to bleed. His hand was black and full of pus and blood, his left hand, which held the tin plate. He would then caress and fondle his left hand, and stop being jealous of Szamek. He knew it had to be thus. His left leg and left hand were suffering. His left leg was turned towards the door and the cold stole in through the door, it painted painful stripes on his thigh, but his right leg was well taken care of; nothing bothered his right. That was close to the fire where they heated the soldering irons. That would not get rheumatism. He could even put a glove on his right hand; his right hand could afford that luxury. His left haud, the poor one, had to work, had to suffer the hammer beats. Aspirant Szamek was detailed by Fate to the office, to the warm office, where

the clerks drank nice, hot tea all day long, and talked about Palestine. The clerks were enthusiastic about collectivism which they said was the Utopian ideal: intellectuals and manual labourers working together in perfect harmony. Just as here in the *Nemalah*. Of course, not everybody could be working at the anvil, some one had to do mental work, too. To confer with customers and clients, to take the responsibility one might say, was even harder work.

The feeling of shame under which he had laboured during the first few days, whenever he had picked up the hammer, slowly disappeared. But he had grown irritable, cross, and bitter, and the moment the foreman sounded the gong, he threw away the hammer and dashed out of the shop as if chased. He had grown suspicious of the directors, he suspected them of not dividing the profits punctually and correctly. He spoke of the directorate in an ironical and disparaging manner. He boiled over when he saw how they spent money in the *Theatrical Buffet*, how they spent more than all the labourers earned. He smelt a rat somewhere, and told his observations to the other workers, who also became excited.

In six weeks he left his job. He picked a quarrel with his employers on a pay day, he charged them with being far worse than the other manufacturers. Those at least did not expect their workers to be interested in their theories, with which the workers had nothing in common: they did not demand hypocrisy, they demanded nothing but work. They did not try to get hold of their workers' souls—

"We don't demand it either—"

"I know—I know—But you like it. Whoever is interested in your ideas you call a good man and raise his wages."

"Well, we have the right to do that, haven't we?"

"Yes, but you call yourselves different. Why don't you confess that this is just another capitalistic undertaking?"

He did not go back. To himself he confessed that it was not the directorate he disliked, although he had his own opinion of them, but the work. He hated work.

He decided that he would once more try to live on loans.

He thought he might manage to raise five hundred roubles a month, and that would be enough. Rather be a swindler than work.

It was much easier than he expected. He did not even have to simulate misery. He merely informed a few of the big capitalists, quite confidentially, that the son of the President of the House of Lords was starving. He knew the family at home. It would be a superb investment to lend to the President's son, such an act would be very favourably commended at home. With his last roubles he bought fine cigarettes, he offered them to the capitalists and spoke, in an off-hand manner, of his estates at home. He casually informed them that he had found an excellent overseer for his estates. He got in touch with agents and told them that there were still men in the camp to whom a loan would be an investment.

A private helped him in his bluffing campaign. Infantryman Eugene Sályi, who came from his part of the world, and who had often heard his name before the war, testified that he was rich.

In a few days, he received several very good offers. Jampel, to whom he had sold the wood, indignantly asked him why he turned to others when he knew that he was always at his disposal. Eugene Sályi brought in men of means, who gave money to him gladly, too, although they would have given still more gladly to Gyurka Szász, who, however, borrowed only modestly. He said he did not want to burden his family.

Sályi said that he was glad to bring him moneyed men, but that he wanted to buy some tools for himself, too. He asked him to vouch for him. It was a ridiculously low sum that Sályi wanted to borrow.

"Why don't you borrow more? I'll vouch for you—"

"God forbid! I have a young wife and a family at home, I don't want to take on too much of a burden—My little land can't stand so much mortgage—"

Now that he was in a better position he had more time to look round the camp. He had time to sit in the *cafés*, to carry on endless conversations with the jobless, to wait for

the spring which was soon to come again to the Siberian steppes.

CHAPTER LXXVI

SPRING came.

It began just like all the other days. Floury bakers' assistants delivered fresh rolls, a cavalry lieutenant hurried for tea-water. A judge of the Hungarian Supreme Court and a lawyer picked up their axes. Uncle Korzer sharpened his pencil. Captain Görög hung the tray with the potato-pancakes around his neck. Szamek lighted a cigar and went over to the *Nemalah,* Reiss's was just closing and the drunken patrons were kicked out. The camp was awakening.

Shots were heard. Machine guns began to rattle and whistling, whizzing bullets lodged here and there in the walls of the barracks. A shell screamed over the camp.

Captain Görög put down his tray, Szamek looked round interestedly. Uncle Korzer murmured something in his moustache.

Creeping cautiously and looking for protection, the prisoners of war tried to find out what it was all about. They had not the slightest idea of what could have happened.

Cossack squadrons raced through the camp and lashed the prisoners into the barracks with their knouts. But even at the risk of their lives, the prisoners soon emerged again.

The din grew louder. Bullets flew thicker and thicker. A sightseer, bloody and lifeless, dropped from the roof of a barrack. Another sensation-seeker was shot in the leg, he was also stretched on the ground. When the Cossacks saw that it was dangerous to be curious, they left the prisoners to their fate and whirled out of the camp.

The prisoners climbed on to the roofs, on to the fences; the rooms on the upper floors were crowded. Four men were on top of the water-tower. They were everywhere, wherever they could see anything. They darted hither and thither ex-

citedly. They shouted:

"There are two dead Russian officers before the *Lavka!*"

"The rebels killed them! The 30th Siberian Regiment mutinied!"

"The mutineers are already in skirmishing order!"

"They are surrounded from the direction of the salami factory!"

"The Czechs are coming from the summer camp! With four field guns!"

Red agitators had visited the recruits of the 30th Siberian Regiment the night before. They had incited them to revolt and, at dawn, they had murdered several of their officers. They had dug themselves in outside the prisoners' camp. The loyal Russian troops, together with the Czechs, kept them under fire. They were shooting at them with machine guns, trench-mortars, field-guns, shrapnel, whatever was handy. The camp too was showered with projectiles. It was interesting, that whenever such things happened it always took place in the camp. In '18, too, when—

. . . . The machine guns rattle faster, the shells make huge craters in the field, the shrapnel mows down the young recruits—

At eight o'clock sharp, silence.

A priest, in full vestments, approaches the mutineers. He is holding high a white flag. Behind him, two civilians are carrying a church banner. The young Siberian recruits—one can see them quite clearly—take off their caps. They jump out of their trench. They surround the priest and kiss his hands. They have surrendered to the priest.

They pile arms and assemble unarmed. Apparently, they have been promised clemency, otherwise they would not have piled arms. Now they fall in in column and, singing merrily, stepping rhythmically, they march towards those to whom, but a few minutes before, they were sending death.

There are about two thousand of them. As they reach their enemy of a few minutes ago, the priest suddenly runs away from them, and away dart the two civilians carrying the banner. Armed Cossacks surround the disarmed rebels.

Knouts fly and crash on their faces, swords swing and

slash their cheeks. They crack open rebel skulls, they rip up rebel bellies, they cut open rebel eyes.

The green fields echo a shriek of dismay from surprised Siberian boys. Rebel throats are slit open, blood and marrow drip from the swords.

The banners, true, were genuine church banners. But the priest was a sergeant-major with a false beard, and the two banner-carriers were two captains.

Two thousand ambushed, trapped young boys are lashed into *cafés* transformed into jails. The revengers undress them. They chain the bloody-eyed youths. He who resists is dead in a moment. The bark of revolvers and the swish of swords trickle out through the closed windows.

The swords swing all day long and all night long. The knouts have gone mad.

Men are thrown into the ditch beyond the fence. Men with no eyes, men with ears lopped off, men without hands and feet, men with severed throats, men with chopped faces. Saplings of men who, yesterday, were Siberian soldiers.

But there are no burials as yet. More deaths are to come yet. There will be more of them yet.

The heap of corpses is not high enough yet.

The court-martial is busy already.

The events take place outside the camp, but the camp is only a few steps away, the prisoners can see everything. Let them see everything! They may learn something! Let them look! Let them see how the rebels are taken to the field! By twos! By threes! By fours!

It is easy to see who is sentenced to death. He wears white. And he is shot down from behind after a few paces.

But they have to be careful when they shoot, because the field swarms with wheelbarrows, picking up corpses. They have to be careful, they may kill innocent men.

The ditch is full.

A pit ought to be dug, there are so many more of them yet.

Rifles crack in the field, white-clad rebels collapse. One of them makes a gesture, he lifts his arms as if—

A sword flies out of its scabbard, the rebel skull is cut into

two, the arm is severed, it drops in the green grass.

The howls go on all day long and all night long, and the crack of the rifles, too. Soon it will be noon again, and the pile of corpses is still rising.

It is afternoon, soon it will be evening, and yet it does not cease. You feel as if the bullets were splashing your brains, as if they were crashing into your skull, as if they were piercing your ears. You must listen to them. You must listen to them even if you hold your ears: you see them even if you shut your eyes. Twilight has come and still it goes on. How long?

It is late at night. The rifles still bark.

There is no sleep to-night. There has been no sleep for two nights. There is no sleep abroad. Only vengeance.

On the morning of the third day, silence. The pile is taken away. They tidy the field. They pick up whatever lies here and there in the dust.

Screaming mujiks, swooning, shrieking mothers arrive from the neighbouring villages.

They, too, are lashed. There are no graves dug as yet. They will have plenty of time to collapse on the mass-grave when it is ready. We aren't that far, as yet.

The mujiks have come running bareheaded, and the women have brought no bread and geese as they usually do. But, on the other hand, their soldier boys do not embrace them now.

Terrifying news flies through the camp. The President of the *Turul Society* has been summoned to appear before the court-martial. Pélyi, author of the pamphlet entitled, "Twenty Million Hungarians," has been summoned. And Székely, too, the vice-president, and Dr. Száva, the secretary, and Fekete and Katona from among the members. Dr. Forgács has been summoned, too. They have come for Dukesz, and Kálmán Ludvig, the editor, also has to go.

Near the subterranean barracks, a rebel officer is hiding in a ditch. He has been trembling and shivering in that ditch for two days. He sees a patrol approaching. The end!

A shot. The rebel has committed suicide.

The patrol pulls his corpse out of the ditch. A rebel officer! But he wears a grey coat. An Austro-Hungarian coat! Who gave it to him?

So? There is no answer? Ah, really?

Neighbouring barracks, fall in!

Decimation follows—One—two—ten—one—two—ten—Forward, march!—

No, wait! The barrack commander must be among them. Who is the barrack commander?

"The commander was not in last night—"

"Second in command?"

"Infantryman Eugene Sályi—"

"Infantryman Sályi, forward—No, wait a bit. There's one man too many. One man must go back. Can't you hear? One man fall back into line—"

But the legs are rooted in the ground, the soon-to-be murdered eyes can only stare—

"Can't you decide who it's to be! Well—*You* go back—"

A few steps, then a volley, the doomed men collapse, and among them Eugene Sályi, temporary barrack-commander, who preferred starving to taking on any more burden, who did not want to mortgage his little land, his little house at Kökönyesd—

In the meantime, Captains Krasilnikov and Mögyorossy find Dr. István Száva guilty of organizing the *Turul Society*, which included criminal aspirations in its programme; also Dr. Géza Pélyi, Lajos Székely, Lieutenant Emil Fekete and Dr. Gyula Katona. Dr. István Száva is permitted to give the pictures of his wife and his little son, before which he has been praying these past five years, and his wedding ring, to a brother officer for safe-keeping. The others have no last wishes. The *Turul Society*, and the *Hungarian Society*, by planting the seed of unjustified aspirations, have spread the spirit of rebellion in the camp. Dezso Forgács was found guilty two years ago, and his suspended sentence will now be executed. Aspirant Arthur Dukesz, Cornet Kálmán Ludvig, Privates János Papp, George Pável, Aspirants Albert Gáspár, Alajos Molnár, Dezsö Krassovsky, and Béla Skoff have published a Communistic paper and therefore it is to be

supposed that they have been connected with the rebellion. The penalty: firing-squad. To be executed at once.

Six o'clock in the afternoon, and the procession is slowly marching to the graves already dug. Dr. Forgács is marching at the head, smoking a cigarette. Pélyi and Dukesz are busy. They are holding up Ludvig.

Two wholly antagonistic points of view support Ludvig, who thus perhaps will be able to drag himself to the execution ground.

Krassovsky waves his hand to the camp. He knows that, from behind the closed windows, thousands of imprisoned eyes are watching them.

At the curve, they disappear.

A volley—

Sluka, the former room-mate, stands on guard before the window.

"I say, Sluka—"

"Don't stick out your head, our orders are to shoot—No one is permitted to look out—"

"Don't be silly, Sluka—"

Little Sluka lifts the rifle to his shoulder and fires—Orders . . . .

CHAPTER LXXVII

THE first snowflakes were whirling in the air, and the horrors slowly receded from the prisoners' hearts. The face-powder mill went on working and the *cafés* extended credit only till Saturday. Babustyák was the most popular character actress, in the roulette room of Barrack No. 7 twenty roubles was the lowest bid, and a new, more moderate magazine took the place of the *Yenisei*. A button manufacturer reorganized his plant and manufactured winter shoes, the Czech legionaries placed large orders for linen intended for Russian girls, although they sometimes complained that it would be good to go home.

The executions of the summer were deeply deplored. It was said that Miss Elza Bandström, of the Swedish Red Cross, had intervened, and it was she who had been respon-

sible for the end of the butchery. One could talk quite calmly with the Czechs, they analyzed the events quite sensibly. Why, they had been inmates of the camp themselves and not even so very long ago, either, but they had been put on the active list and had had to go. Now they lived outside the camp, in their own barracks or in trains. Occasionally, they still came in to get hold of more men. They held raids, for everybody who lived on Czechoslovak territory was required to serve.

But otherwise, there wasn't much difference. They told them that a delegation from home had visited them, it had brought decorations for their Siberian deeds, and promotions. So the promotions and decorations were quite serious after all. The prisoners should have thought twice over that the *Turul Society*, and the *Hungarian Society*, and the *Yenisei* had also been serious, just as starvation was also serious, and prosperity too. If one had money he could buy serious food with it.

There were already many dissatisfied men among the Czechs, they said they had bled enough in the interest of the Allied Powers, had sacrificed enough. Home, home! They, too, wanted to go home.

Sometimes they became quite careless and betrayed to their old comrades, their former fellow-prisoners, that there was trouble coming. Discipline in the Koltchak armies was tottering, the Czechoslovak troops wanted to go home, the Reds were pressing the front hard, and the front was no longer in the Urals. The Reds had already taken Novo-Nikolaievsk, they were pressing the White armies farther and farther back into Siberia, and the Siberians were tired of warfare. They did not know which would be better: to lose or to win. If they won again, the whole thing would never end. They were afraid they would not be able to hold out much longer, there were neither enough men nor enough ammunition, and the Siberians were firmly against them.

Nearer and nearer came the front, the Reds took more and more cities, more and more garrisons mutinied, and it was said that only soldiers were permitted to travel by train.

By the time the tormenting Siberian cold arrived and the invincible buran started to blow over the Siberian steppes, all further resistance was impossible, and the front collapsed. After Christmas, they said quite openly that in only a few days more the Reds would be here, and then even those few days passed.

On an especially noisy afternoon filled with contradictory news, Lieutenant Dima, the one who had lectured on Oriental Gods, emphatically declared that the day of action had arrived. Atchinsk, but a few miles away, had already rebelled. The brave will follow me!

And one hundred and twenty-seven worn, seedy and starving prisoners followed Lieutenant Dima. In the city, and among the Russian soldiers, confusion reigned. But Lieutenant Dima, with his one hundred and twenty-seven scarecrows and four field-guns, took up a position near the cemetery where the poet Géza Gyöno was buried.

The situation was grave, but Dima was ridiculous. What sort of information was in his possession? What did he want with his hundred and twenty-seven miserable, embittered, crucified prisoners of war? Whom was he waiting for near the cemetery? Whom did he want to capture? What was it all for?

Dark fell, and cavalry appeared on the hillsides. The cavalry were followed by Koltchak's retreating troops. Huge masses of them. The slopes of the hills were black with men. They came on horseback, afoot, in carts.

Lieutenant Dima fired his four field-guns.

There was no chance of missing.

After a few salvoes, delegates came. They said there were thirty-two thousand of them. They had been fleeing from the Red troops across two thousand versts. They could go on no longer with this terrible retreat. There were children, women and civilians among them. They were ready to surrender. But the victors should beware! There were many sick among them. Half of the thirty-two thousand were infected with typhus. They had been retreating until they could no longer stand on their feet. They could not go on, they were tired to death.

The Russian troops in the city joined Dima.

They were disarming the Koltchak troops all night long.

Half of them learned only next day that they had surrendered to one hundred and twenty-seven men. But that made no difference. They would never have been able to go on anyway.

Koltchak's front had completely collapsed, and those of the troops who could were fleeing by train, to the east.

But in the camp neither the Reds nor the Whites reigned. Neither industry nor science, nor even the arts. Neither enterprise nor capital, neither poverty nor riches. Neither friendship nor enmity, neither beauty nor ugliness, neither money nor dignity.

Typhus reigned in the camp.

The forges became cold, the bellows were empty of air, the hammering ceased. The mixing-ladles in the shoe polish factory became dusty, all the fires went out. The fire that fed the factories as well as the one that Pélyi had lighted, the one that had sparkled from Dukesz, the one that heated the Turks, the one which Hans Kohn spread, which separated the Germans from the Czechs, which drove the men to the theatre or to the roulette wheels, which spurred them on to make more money which fried the pancakes, which kindled the agents, which blazed under the trading companies, which melted the gold soles, which soldered the mess-tins—

The Koltchak troops had brought seventy thousand horses with them. Seventy thousand horses neighed for death on the fields. They neighed hunger and thirst. Seventy thousand horses were dying in the six-foot deep snow, no one had expected them, there was nothing for them to eat. Eight thousand typhous men were dying in hospital beds by twos and threes, under the hospital beds by twos and threes, on the floors of the hospital, in the corridors, in the barracks among the healthy, in the *cafés* transformed into hospitals. They couldn't be cured, there was not even one tabloid of aspirin for them, no one had expected them.

They buried in the camp and they buried in the ctiy. Half of the men were typhous, the other half buried. Polish lancers and Jewish cantors, Hungarian aristocrats and Rus-

sian timber-haulers, Red commanders and capitalists rolled and writhed with red spots on their bodies and breathed their last. Victors and vanquished, Reds and Whites, noblemen and orderlies, agitators and patriots. Just as, in that mass-grave at the end of the camp, the mass-grave of last summer, there also lay together Communists and Patriots.

The dead could not be buried in graves. The earth was frozen and they could not dig graves. They blasted pits with dynamite. The carcasses of horses competed with human corpses. The carcasses had to be seen to equally, because they too would bring pestilence if the spring should find them there. The dynamiting went on all day long. They blasted the mass-graves for men and horses alike, and these graves were not made for sermons and knells. These graves were protection. They did not blast them in reverence. They tried to protect themselves from pestilence, from the coming pestilence.

Comrades, victors, and vanquished were gathered in one ghastly pile. It could be done because at fifty-five below zero they were not dangerous. They would be dangerous only in the spring when they would rise in the form of pestilence.

The comrades waited, waited in sheaves. If the head of one broke off when he was dragged to the pile, he never met himself again. The heads had to be gathered in separate heaps. The others, the decent and complete corpses, freed from *Wadko* and industry and commands, lay silently and naked next to each other. Until they should be buried. One looked out, the other looked in. That is to say, if he had not been so careless as to drop his head somewhere. The comrades waited in the human sheaves, waited for their eternal dwellings, fifty at a time.

Typhus was the master now, and it was dangerous not merely because one could die of it. It was dangerous because it heralded the pestilence of spring—

Far away from the sheaves, the clothes of the naked corpses burned, day and night. A typhus corpse was not entitled to raiment. In the interests of the living, he was not entitled to earthly garb.

One day, he received a letter. It was from Jampel. He

asked him to come if he wanted to see him once more.

He hurried to the city. Near the town, he passed by the Jewish cemetery. A hearse stopped just then at its gate. The driver went into the caretaker's house to warm himself. He left the hearse unguarded.

A horrible curiosity drove him towards the corpses.

He lifted the black cloth with his gloved hand.

Jampel lay on the top. He lay naked in an exclusive, small company. Next to the virtuous Jampel lay a lady. She also was naked. Jampel's mouth was slightly open. It seemed as if he had been smiling, but his chest was no longer red. It was black.

He dropped the black cloth.

Jampel would not build a house at Gerez.

He turned to go, back to the camp.

Suddenly he remembered something.

He felt very much ashamed. But he looked round. He was all alone on the bank of the Yenisei, alone with the Siberian wind that raced over the steppe.

At first he was ashamed, but then he hardened his heart, and pulled off his glove, with which he had lifted the cloth from the body of his dead comrade. He threw away the infected glove. Thus he took leave of Jampel.

CHAPTER LXXVIII

AFTER two long years, the first news from home arrived. It was not very promising. In the meantime, a new geography had been created in Europe. The mountains were still in their places, and the rivers, too, only they belonged to other countries now.

There was no quiet as yet, although it was very encouraging to know that there was no longer war either. There was peace.

Not the kind of peace that permitted one to go home; not the kind of peace that allowed soft-cushioned trains to arrive on the Yenisei. No, that kind of peace had not arrived as yet.

No, the prisoners of war were not going home as yet.

They could not go because Koltchak, in his retreat, had destroyed the railway, they could not go because on certain fronts fighting had still to be liquidated, and they could not go because of the typhus.

No chance.

The fact that a prisoner was willing to risk the typhus was no excuse. After all, they knew the prisoner of war well enough to know that he would risk anything. Typhus was still raging, all the intermediate cities were still infected, all the stations were still infected, and typhus was not to be dragged into European Russia. Although, when you came to think of it, it was raging there, too.

The trains carried only coal. Prisoners who were willing to guard the coal shipments were allowed to go to Moscow after six weeks of service. And it was child's play to get home from Moscow—

Some of them had doubts whether they could undertake this guarding of coal shipments. The coal had to be guarded with arms, and they were afraid that, at home, this would be considered as military service for the enemy. If that were so there would be no point in going home. Then it would be wiser to remain here as hostages as Gyurka Szász did. That at least would be considered in his favour at home.

Crowds of them reported themselves for the guarding of coal.

They had to guard the coal for six full weeks, it took that much time to take a trainload once from the Siberian mines to European Russia. They had to stand for six weeks in the open coal trucks, rifle in hand, and guard the treasure.

Near the larger stations, they had to guard not so much the coal as the Russian railwaymen. Those were the ones who tried to steal it, to exchange it for all sorts of necessities. But they were armed, and there were more of them than Russians, and so they could be very active in the performance of their duty. They guarded the coal honestly.

And after six weeks, they were faithfully taken to Moscow.

How simple and easy it was!

A little bathing, some disinfection, and the fortunates

were given papers and sent off to the Russian border, to Jamburg.

Who cared for those who could not pass through the sieve, for those who were left behind as hostages, who were left behind doing hard labour? Who cared for those who were left unburied at the gate of the Krasnoyarsk Jewish Cemetery, or piled up high in the middle of the camp, or in the subterranean barracks?

Who looked back at the mass-grave which, as a symbol of the annihilated camp, rose beyond the fences, who remembered the plumbers' shop, the collapsed states, the lost command, the factories, the industries? The Produce and Exchange Bank, and Ortmann's debauchery on New Year's Eve and the sunken civilization, the nationalistic arguments and class-wars, for which the comrades had made the supreme sacrifice—

Who looked back at the capitalists of the camp and the beggars of the camp and the civilization of the camp? A huge white blotch of line in the place where once upon a time sheaves of corpses had lain was all that was left. And, of course, the black burnt acres in the field, and the ashes, which reminded one that what had been earthly of them had gone up in flames there—

Beyond Jamburg, on the Esthonian border, the lists and identification papers were once more examined. His own identification paper was not in order. They said it was nothing, they would telephone at once to Jamburg to ascertain whether he was included in the official list. The Russian official went to the telephone and called up Jamburg. Through the little window, he anxiously watched the train. The official was already talking with Jamburg when he suddenly heard the engine whistle, when he saw the train slowly beginning to roll out —

He dashed out of the guard-house.

Up the embankment!

He yelled for some one to stretch out a hand. Otherwise he could not reach the upper edge of the high goods truck.

He clung to the hand and, with a last supreme effort, he climbed up.

Shots followed him from the guard-house.

But he was in the truck, and the train was already safely rolling among Esthonia's thousand lakes —

The man who had stretched out his hand, a private, cursed. He said he had not known what it was all about, he had stretched out his hand quite by accident. And if he had had a knife handy he would have cut his hand off—

"That's all right, my friend—I am grateful to you just the same —"

"The hell you are! You almost pulled me back into Russia!—"

They were quarantined in Swinemünde. They were watched for two weeks to see whether they had not brought some Eastern epidemic with them.

In Stettin, he actually attacked the newspapers. He let himself be carried away by the long-missed excitement of news.

. . . . Humanity, I have been torn away from You for seven years! How can I look up to You?

God, what are the most burning questions in the world to-day?

Permit me to raise my unworthy eyes to you, Humankind.

Of course, the deluge of blood has washed away all hatred.

After the great sacrifice, the exalted voice of purified Man is ringing clearly, isn't it?

. . . The Alsatian question—The problem of death—The epilogue of German greatness in Alsatian politics—

That's funny !

. . . A joke in the *Woche*.

A Negro tribal chief in a top hat. Is that a joke? Are these the jokes after the War?

Do you laugh at such jokes? Do your readers laugh at these jokes, *Woche?*

But, I now see, this tribal chief wears not only a top hat, but shoes also, and a frock coat, and socks, and he seems to be well-fed and—free—

What's funny about that?

Isn't this funny too: university graduate, suspected of typhus, in a tattered artillery tunic, inside-out, unshaven, his feet wrapped in rags, lousy for seven years, fighting enemy tribes for seven years, sleeping on shelves—isn't that ludicrous, too?

At the first station at home, he left the train. He could not stand the formalities. He was lucky. He found a wagon from his native town outside the station. He was going back along the road by which he had set out when he had started.

Haggard, pale, torn, worn.

Thus he arrived after seven years—

Here was the spot where Csutor's son had got into the carriage—

Here it was that they had decided he would come home—How could they have known this—

My God—Mother—

What if? What if—

Before they reached the village he got down off the wagon. He walked.

He sent some one ahead to tell them at home that he was coming —

On the road as he passed, the peasants recognized him and clapped their hands in amazement. An old farmer would not let him go on. A peasant of his own age embraced and kissed him —

Women cried over him, children hopped about in excitement, old peasants accompanied him bareheaded, as if he had come home from Beyond—

He went up the street and, all of a sudden, he saw running towards him his grey-haired father, bare-headed, sobbing, his wife, wringing her hands, with quivering lips, with tears in her eyes, his frightened little son—

But he did not see either his mother or his brother—

Neither then, nor ever after—

. . . The months slowly rolled by, and one morning, as he was sitting in the garden, with quinces yellowing on the trees and barrels being repaired in the barn for the coming harvest, a queer disease suddenly attacked him—

He had never thought of that before—

Until now, he had thought of nothing but to wash away those seven years. To recover from the suffering of those seven years.

And now he felt that a weight was slowly descending upon his heart.

Of course.

He could not go on any longer like this—

He had to look out for something, he had to do something.

He had to open once more his little diploma-sail against the storm that raged on the ocean of life.

He had to make a living!

There would be reproaches in the eyes to-morrow, and, all of a sudden, he was afraid of the future.

The glasses in the old cupboard would spread reproaches to-morrow, and it seemed to him that the quinces on the branches were already disapprovingly shaking their heads—

And he took leave of the grim and painful, but irresponsible past and, with heavy heart and uncertain steps, he started to go—out of the garden of unconcern. . . .

48692